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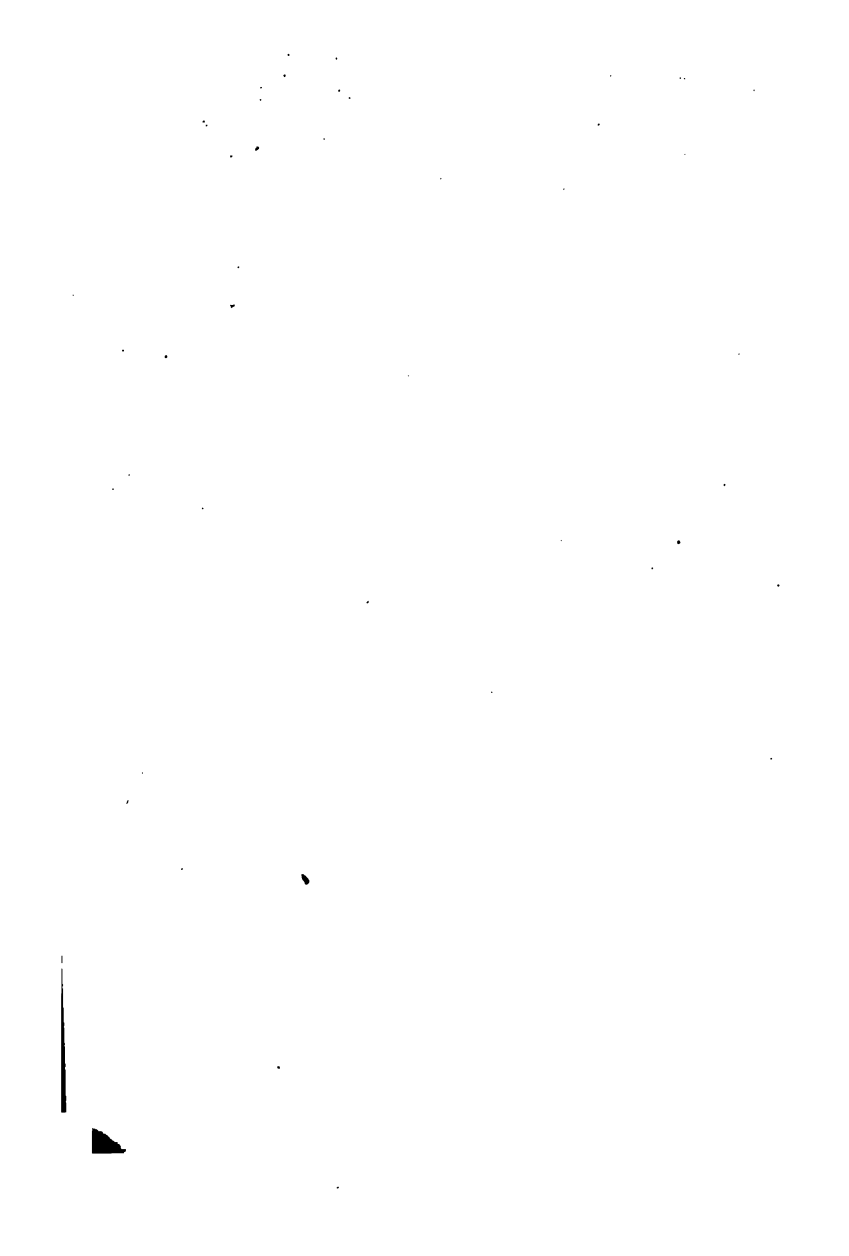
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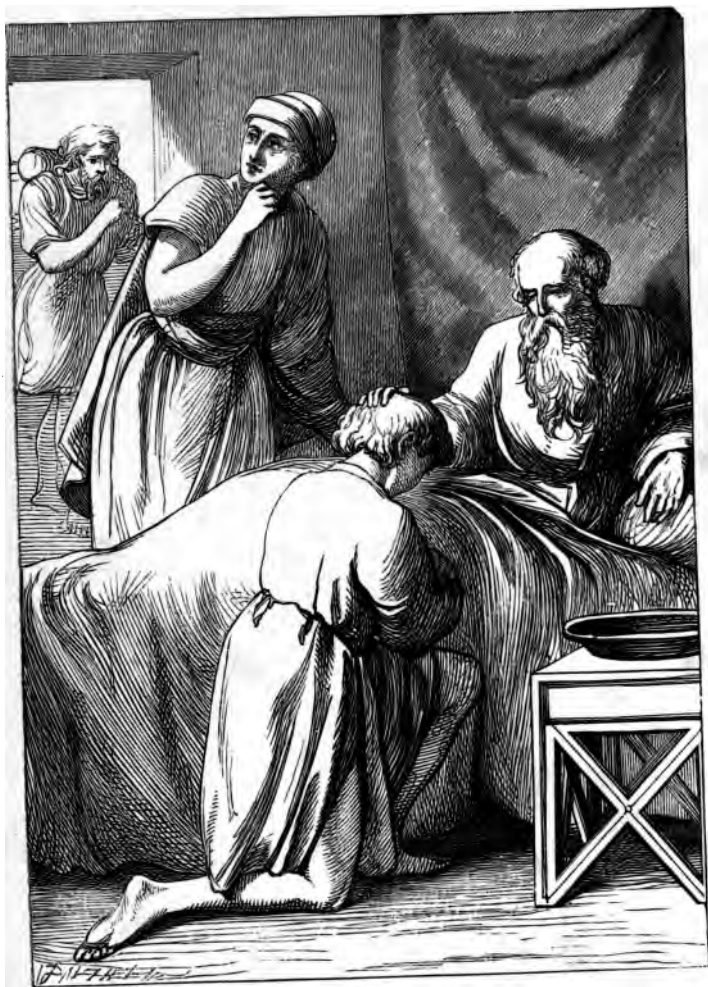




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ISAAC BLESSING JACOB.

THE BIBLE OPENED

FOR

CHILDREN.

BY

MARY BRADFORD.

WITH

TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY DALZIEL BROTHERS.



LONDON:

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PREFACE.

THE writer of these stories does not offer them to the public with the vain thought of excelling those already published ; indeed, the first series were not written with any idea of publication, but solely for her own children. She has, however, thought that other parents may have felt with herself, that the many selections there are do not include enough of the Bible incidents even for children. The writer has adopted the plan of placing questions at the end of the chapter or story, as a less prosy and more agreeable

one than that of writing the stories in the form of question and answer. If the writer has succeeded in gathering together such portions of God's Holy Word as will interest children, and make them desire to read for themselves, she will feel thankful for the blessing that will rest upon her mite thrown into the treasury of instruction for the lambs of the fold.

M. E. B.

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First Series.



STORIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE BIBLE

OPENED FOR CHILDREN.

THE stories that I am going to read to you, dear children, will be about good men who lived in the world, and about things which happened before Jesus Christ came down from heaven ; and they are called Stories from the Old Testament. The Old and New Testament together make the book which is called the Bible, the best of all books : a book which I hope my dear children will prize the more the longer they live ; for it will teach them, better than any other book can do, how to love and obey God.

STORY I.

THE CREATION AND DISOBEDIENCE OF OUR FIRST PARENTS.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.”—1 JOHN v. 8.

HAVE my dear little children ever wondered
Gen. } how this beautiful earth was made,
i. } with the bright sun, and all the
lovely flowers, and fresh green grass, and
sparkling water? I cannot tell you how
it was made, but the Word of God says
that everything was created in six days.
Before God created things there was
nothing—no trees, no sky, no water, no
flowers—nothing but dark space. God
made this beautiful world, and then He
made the pretty birds, and all the animals,

and the fish ; and then God created one man and woman to live in this beautiful world, in a part which was like a { Gen. ii. large garden, called the Garden of Eden. This man and woman were called Adam and Eve. Adam gave names to all the animals and birds.

Now you think, I daresay, that Adam and Eve would be so grateful to God for placing them in such a beautiful garden, and surrounding them with so many pretty things, and that they would love Him so much, that they would take care to do everything that God told them to do ; but I am sorry to say this was not the case : they disobeyed God, and God { Gen. iii. was so angry that He sent them out of the garden into a part of the world which was not so beautiful. This disobedience was the first sin, and from this time the world lost a great part of its beauty, and birds and flowers began to die, and God said that man should die also.

4 THE BIBLE OPENED FOR CHILDREN.

After Adam and Eve were sent out of
Gen. } the garden, they had two sons,
iv. } Cain and Abel. Cain was wicked,
and slew his brother Abel in a passion.
Abel was the first man to die, and Cain was
the first murderer. He was the cause of
his brother's death, but death came among
us in consequence of the disobedience of
Adam and Eve. If they had obeyed God,
there would have been no such thing as
death. Cain was so afraid when he found
that he had killed his brother, that he fled
away from his father and mother, and
wandered about by himself in the world.

Now, dear children, if you would like
to ask any questions about what I have
been telling you, I will answer them.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Mamma, where was God before
the sky was made; is not heaven in the
sky?

Mamma. Heaven is above the sky, dear

child, far, far out of our sight. Where God was before He made the world I cannot tell you, for the heavens were made at the same time. But God is not confined to any place; He is everywhere, in heaven, in earth, and in every corner of the earth at the same moment. God is a spirit; that is, He has no body that we can see or touch.

Charles. How did Adam know how to call the birds and animals by name—who told him?

Mamma. God told him what to call them, and made them all pass before Adam.

George. You did not tell us how Adam and Eve disobeyed God, mamma. What did they do?

Mamma. They eat of the fruit of a tree which God had told them not to touch; it was the one act of obedience God expected from them, and they were unfaithful.

STORY II.

THE FLOOD AND HISTORY OF NOAH.

“For God is faithful that promised.”—HEBREWS x. 23.

I AM sure you have often seen the pretty rainbow in the sky, dear children, with its soft colours, and you would, I dare say, like to know why God placed it there.

After Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden of Eden, the earth became more
Gen. }
vi. } thickly peopled; that is, there were more men and women in it; and these people were very wicked, so wicked that after some time God determined to destroy them all by a great flood, which washed every living thing and everybody from off the earth, except one good man, whose name was Noah, who was saved from the

flood in the following way. God told him to build a house, which should be like a boat at the bottom, and into this house Noah took his wife, and his sons and daughters, and two of every animal and bird ; and your little toy, called { Gen. vii.
“ Noah’s ark,” with its contents, is in imitation of the house Noah lived in when the earth was all covered with water. The high hills also were covered with water, and every living thing that was not in the ark died.

At length God caused all the water to go back from off the earth. It went away very slowly ; Noah let a dove { Gen. viii.
fly out of the ark when he saw that the water was going away ; but the little dove flew round and round, and then came back again, for she could not find a green tree to perch on, or anywhere to rest her little feet. Noah waited seven days more, and then he let the dove fly again ; and in the evening she came back with a green leaf in her

beak, and that showed Noah the waters were subsiding, and that he would soon be able to leave the ark. And when he did so they must all have been very glad to be able to walk about again; and the animals must have been very glad to have some nice green grass to eat once more. God promised that He would never destroy the people from off the earth by a

Gen. } flood any more, and as a sign of
ix. } this promise He made the beautiful rainbow to be seen in the sky when the sun shines after a shower of rain. So, whenever you look at the pretty rainbow, I hope you will remember why God made it, and think how very wicked the people must have been to make God so very angry as to destroy them all. Now for the questions, if you wish to ask any.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Yes, mamma, I want to know

where Noah put all the animals in the ark. Was the great elephant in there ?

Mamma. Yes, my love, the great elephant and the little mouse, and even the little fly and the busy bee, were in the ark. This we are very sure of, because the Bible tells us that two of every living thing went in. What became of them all while in the ark, I cannot tell you ; but I think it is very likely that God, who is able to do with everything just as He likes, made the great beasts tame for a time, and content to stay quietly in the ark till Noah let them out.

Charles. Thank you, dear mamma ; I am very glad to know why the pretty rainbow is in the sky, and now I know why you say when we are waiting to go out on a rainy day, “ Oh, it will be fine now, for there is a rainbow.”

Mamma. Yes, the storm generally clears away when the rainbow comes.

STORY III.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM.

“The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children.”—PSALM cxv. 14.

I AM now going to tell you about Abraham, who is sometimes called in the Bible, the

Gen. } xii.	father of the faithful, and also faithful Abraham, because he believed all that God promised him should come to pass, and always did what God commanded him. First of all God told him to leave his own country, where he had been born, and where all his friends and relations lived, and to go into another country, in which people lived who were his enemies, and where he had not a bit of ground that he could call his own: and yet God promised him that all the land should be his, and that his children should
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possess it after him for ever ; and Abraham believed God. When Abraham was journeying into Canaan, the name of his new country, he heard that there was a famine in the land, so he stayed in Egypt, a country through which he had to pass, till the famine should be over.

Now Abraham had a wife named Sarah, who was very beautiful—so beautiful that he was afraid some of the Egyptians would wish to marry her, and that they would kill him if they knew he was her husband, in order to get rid of him. So Abraham told Sarah to say that she was his sister. Abraham nearly lost his wife through this deceit, for Pharaoh, King of Egypt, was so pleased with Sarah that he wished to make her his wife ; but God sent trouble upon Pharaoh, to show him that he was doing something wrong, and when he inquired, he found that Sarah was Abraham's wife, so he sent them both away.

Up to this time Abraham had no chil-

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dren of his own. Now, however, God told

Gen. } Abraham that he should have a son
xvii. } of his own, and that he would be
blessed and become the father of many
nations. The son was to be born in a year
from the time God first established his cove-
nant with Abraham. During the year Sodom
Gen. } and Gomorrah, towns in the country
xviii. } in which Abraham dwelt, were burnt
with fire, and everybody that lived in them
destroyed, except Abraham's nephew, Lot,
who left the town of Sodom with his family,
being told by God to do so. God sent the
fire to destroy the people because they were
so very wicked that they would not obey
God; so very wicked were they all that
there could not be found ten people who
were good. When Lot and his family left
the place, God told them to be very quick,
and on no account to look back; but Lot's
Gen. } wife did look back, and she was
xix. } turned into a pillar of salt for her
disobedience.

Soon after this, Abraham's son was born, and he was named Isaac; and we may easily believe how pleased Abraham and his wife were to have a son. While Isaac was still a little boy, God tried Abraham's faith by ordering him to offer up his son on the altar as a sacrifice to Him. This was a very great trial to Abraham, because, not only was Isaac his only son, but God had promised him that his son should be a great man, and the father of many people; and Abraham did not see how this promise could be fulfilled if Isaac died. However, he believed God, and knew that he ought to obey, whatever it might be God ordered him to do; so he took his child, and prepared to offer him up as a sacrifice to God. But God did not intend that Isaac should die; He only wished to see if Abraham would obey; and so He called to him, and told him to offer up a ram which was feeding near to him, instead of his son Isaac.

When Isaac was grown older, his father
 Gen. } wished him to marry one of his
 xxiv. } own countrywomen in the land of
 Chaldea; so he sent a very trustworthy
 servant to choose a wife for Isaac. The
 servant had to take a very long journey,
 and at the end of it he, and the men who
 were with him, and the camels upon which
 they rode, were very thirsty, and so they
 stopped at a well to drink. While they
 were getting off the camels, and preparing
 to draw the water, a young woman came to
 the well, and the man-servant asked her to
 draw some water for him. She did as he
 wished directly, and not only drew water
 for him, but for his camels also. The
 servant took this as a proof that she was
 the maiden he had come to seek, for he
 had asked God to direct him by such a
 sign; so he determined to see more of
 her. Accordingly, he asked her if he
 could lodge in her father's house. The
 young woman, whose name was Rebekah,

answered him yes, her father could lodge him, and also find a stable and food for his camels. So the man went with Rebekah, and he asked her father if he would let his daughter go with him to become the wife of Isaac, Abraham's son. The father said yes, he would allow her to go. So, when the man-servant had rested after his long journey, they returned together to Abraham. Soon after Isaac and Rebekah were married, Abraham died, being a very old man, and he was buried by the side of his wife Sarah. Now, dear children, for questions.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Yes, dear mamma, we have plenty of questions to ask. Was it not very wrong of Abraham to say that Sarah was his sister? It was telling a story, was it not?

Mamma. It was not exactly telling a story, because Sarah was his half-sister;

that is, they both had the same father, but not the same mother. But still it was said with a wish to deceive, and God was much displeased with Abraham for saying so, for all deceit is very hateful in his sight, who is a God of truth.

Charles. How was Sodom burnt, mamma? Did anybody set fire to it?

Mamma. God sent fire from heaven to burn it, my love. This fire was, like the flood, a punishment sent by God for disobedience and wickedness.

Henry. What does it mean by Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt?

Mamma. Most likely she was unable to move after she had turned round, and she was covered with a shower of salt, which hardened upon her in a few minutes. Lot must have been very sorry to lose his wife in such a sad way. Her fault was disobedience, and too much curiosity; she could not resist looking back to see what had become of Sodom.

Charles. Why did God tell Abraham to kill his son, mamma ?

Mamma. Before Jesus Christ came into the world, it was the custom to offer live animals, such as lambs, calves, pigeons, and doves, to God as a sacrifice or atonement for sin. The victims were placed upon an altar, and then killed. And God, to try Abraham's faith, told him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice to Him. God wished to prove whether Abraham believed that He could do everything that He had promised Abraham to do, whatever might happen.

George. What is an altar, mamma ?

Mamma. An altar was a raised place to offer sacrifice upon. They were generally built of stones or earth in different places, often by good men who were travelling, and wished to thank God for any blessing, or pray for any help. Sometimes fruit, or corn, or flour were put upon the altar, instead of an animal. The ram that Abra-

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ham offered up instead of his son was to represent our Saviour Jesus Christ, who was offered up on the cross to save us all from an everlasting death. Jesus Christ is often called in the Bible the "Lamb of God."

STORY IV.

THE HISTORY OF JACOB AND ESAU.

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”—
EPHESIANS iv. 32.

ISAAC had twin sons, named Esau and Jacob, but, though twins, they { Gen.
were of very different dispositions. { xxv.

Esau was fond of hunting and the sports of the field ; Jacob was fond of home, and looking after his flocks. Esau, as the eldest, had, according to the custom of those days, the right to his father’s blessing, and to the blessing which God had told Abraham should be upon all his generations that were to come. However, Esau gave up this right to his brother Jacob for such a trifling

thing as a mess of pottage, or soup, as we should call it, when he was very hungry after hunting ; this showed how very lightly he valued God's blessing. Isaac

Gen. }
xxvii. } their father was now very old and infirm, and he could not see ; he wished to bless his son Esau before he died, and so one day he told Esau to go and hunt and bring some venison, that he might eat of it and then bless him.

Now Rebekah was very anxious that Jacob, who was her favourite son, should have his father's blessing ; so she killed a goat, and made some nice savoury meat that tasted and smelt like venison, and then she dressed Jacob in his brother Esau's clothes and sent him up to his old father with the meat. Isaac thought that Esau had been away a very short time, and he asked him how it was he was returned so quickly. Jacob told a lie, and said that God had helped him to find the venison ; and then he told another lie, and said that he was

Esau. His poor old father being very blind, could not tell that his son was speaking an untruth, so he gave Jacob the blessing which he had intended for Esau, and foretold that he should be a greater man than his brother. Jacob had scarcely left his father's room when Esau came back from hunting, and brought the venison to his father, and asked for the blessing. The old man was very sorry indeed when he found how his son Jacob had deceived him, and Esau was very angry with his brother, and said that he should kill him as soon as their father was dead.

Rebekah heard that Esau had said he should kill Jacob, so she sent him away to his uncle who lived a { Gen. xxviii. long way off. Jacob had to walk all day, and when night came he lay down on the ground, with a stone for his pillow, and fell asleep. While asleep, he dreamt that he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and holy angels going up and down

the ladder. And he also dreamt that he heard God blessing him, and promising to be with him wherever he went. When Jacob woke in the morning he set up the stone which he had used for a pillow as an altar, and he promised by the altar to serve God, and to make a good use of his riches.

Gen. } Jacob stayed with his uncle for a
xxx. } number of years, and married his

two daughters, Rachel and Leah. Rachel was very beautiful, and Leah was very amiable. It was the custom to have more than one wife in those days. Jacob had several sons, and he became very rich in flocks and herds, and his uncle was

Gen. } jealous of him because he was so
xxxi. } rich ; so Jacob left his uncle and

went back to his father's country. When

Gen. } he was on his journey his brother
xxxii. } Esau, who was so angry with him,

and was the cause of his going away, came to meet him. Jacob was afraid when he heard that his brother was coming, for he

thought he might still wish to kill him; so he sent men on before to meet Esau with a present of the best that he { Gen. xxxiii. had, in order to show Esau that he wished to be friends with him. However, Jacob need not have been afraid of his brother, for Esau had forgotten his anger, and was very glad to see his brother again, and ran and kissed him, and they were very good friends. Soon after, Jacob lost his dear wife Rachel, who died whilst { Gen. xxxv. they were still on their journey. Jacob lived to be a very old man, and long enough to see one of his sons become a great man, and I will tell you about him in the next story.

Are there any questions to ask about this pretty story?

QUESTIONS.

Charles. What is the meaning of twin sons, mamma?

Mamma. When two little babies are

born together they are called twin, which word means two.

Henry. Was it not very wrong of Jacob to deceive his father so, and tell him a lie?

Mamma. Yes, my love, it was very wrong; all deceit is wrong, and the Bible tells us that we are not to do evil that good may come. It was right of Jacob to be anxious to have his father's blessing, but it was very wrong of him to tell a lie in order that he might get it. Jacob suffered for this wrong behaviour when his uncle treated him unkindly.

George. Mamma, how could a ladder be put up against the sky?

Mamma. Such a ladder as you see in the garden could not be made to do so, my love; but Jacob only saw the ladder in his dream, and it is not told us what it was like.

Henry. But, mamma, men are not permitted to have two wives?

Mamma. No, my love; the laws of

Christianity do not allow a man to have more than one wife at a time; but when Jacob lived it was allowable, because there were not nearly so many people in the world, and so a man was allowed to have more than one wife that he might have more sons and daughters.

STORY V.

THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH.

"God will bless them that fear Him, both small and great."—
PSALM cxy. 13.

JOSEPH, my dear children, about whom
Gen. }
xxxvii. } I am now going to tell you
a very pretty story, was one of
the younger sons of Jacob, and his
elder brothers were very unkind to him,
because he was a favourite of his father's;
they were very wicked, for they wished to
do their brother harm, and one day when
they were out in the fields minding the
sheep, and Joseph being sent by his father
to inquire after them, they seized their
poor little brother and put him into a
pit; and I am afraid some of them wished
to kill him, but one brother named Reuben,

who had children of his own, begged his brothers not to kill Joseph ; so they took him out of the pit and sold him to some merchants who happened to pass by, and who were going into Egypt.

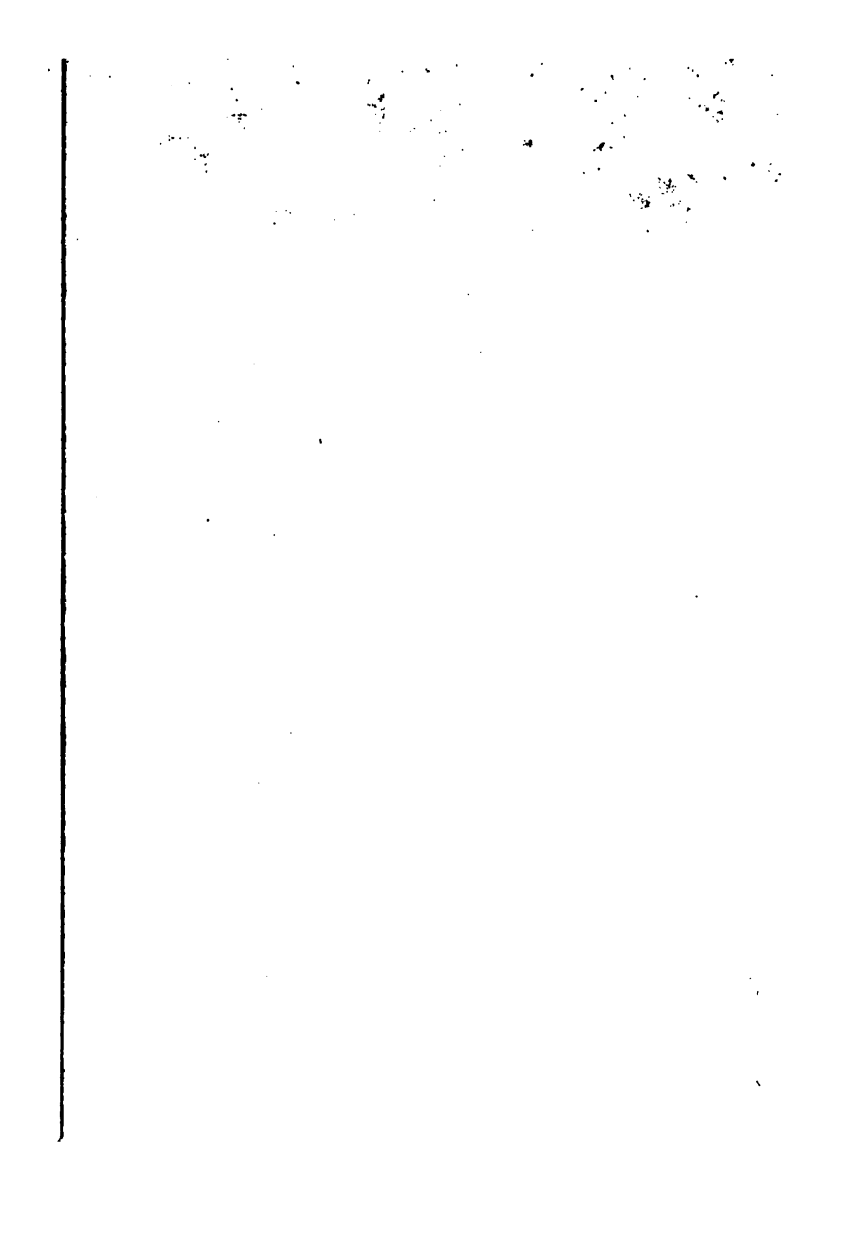
These unkind brothers then took a coat of many colours which Joseph wore, and dipped it in the blood of a goat, and took it home to their father, and made him believe that they had found it so, and that a wild beast must have killed Joseph ; and poor old Jacob was very, very sorry to think his dear boy had met with such a cruel death. The merchants took Joseph { Gen. xxxix.
into Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, who was the principal person in the King of Egypt's house ; and now we shall see that though Joseph seemed to have been very badly used, God had not forgotten him, and He took care of him, and made all his troubles turn to his benefit. Potiphar was very kind to Joseph, and he found he was such a steady good lad, that he

entrusted him to see after everything that was to be done, and made a great deal of him; till one day a false accusation was brought against Joseph, and Potiphar was so angry that he put Joseph in prison. Joseph soon made a friend of the jailor, who treated him very well, and allowed him to help him, instead of treating him as a prisoner. Now I must tell you that in those days God often told people in their dreams when they were asleep, what should come to pass, or rather, I should perhaps say, prepared them for what was going to happen, by making them dream

Gen. } some very curious dream. The king
xl. } of Egypt's butler and baker were in the prison with Joseph, and they both had a very curious dream which they could not make out at all; they told their dreams to Joseph, and he being given wisdom of God, was able to tell the butler and baker what their dreams meant; and in a few days what Joseph told them proved quite



JOSEPH IN PRISON.



true. The butler and baker were both taken out of prison ; the butler was allowed to take his place, and be the king's butler again, but the baker was hung. Joseph remained in prison some time longer, for I am sorry to say the butler forgot how good he had been, and did not try to get him out of prison. By and by, however, the king himself had a dream, and it was one that troubled him very much, and none of the wise men could tell the king what the dream meant. Now the butler remembered Joseph, and he told the king that while he was in the prison Joseph had explained a dream to him that he had ; and that it had happened to him just as Joseph said it would ; so when the king heard this, he sent for Joseph to see if he could explain his dream to him. { Gen. xli.
Joseph told the king that it was {
God who enabled him to explain the dreams, and that the king's dream was to warn him that there would be first seven

years in which there would be plenty of corn and plenty of bread for the people to eat, and afterwards there would follow seven years in which there would be very little corn, and scarcely any bread for the people to eat. Joseph told the king that he had better provide against the seven years of famine, by laying by a great deal of corn during the seven years of plenty, and that the king had better appoint some one who could take care that this was done; it was God who made Joseph so wise and prudent, for all wisdom comes from God, and God rewarded Joseph for trusting in Him and obeying Him. The king thought that nobody would know so well how to provide for bread when the famine came, as he who had shown such wisdom in telling him what to do, so he made Joseph chief man in his house, and gave all his property into his care; and Joseph was to do what he thought best with all the corn. Joseph was now a very great

man; he had a carriage to ride in, and servants to wait upon him. When seven years were passed the famine began, and then everybody came to Joseph for corn to make their bread. Now the famine { Gen. xlii.
was not only in Egypt but in Canaan
also, where Joseph's father and brothers lived. They heard that there was corn to be had in Egypt, so Joseph's brothers came down and brought sacks to fill with corn to make bread; they did not know that the steward of whom they bought the corn was their own brother Joseph whom they had sold some years before to the merchants; but Joseph knew his brothers directly; however he did not tell them who he was, for he was afraid that they might think he would have his revenge now he was a great man, and therefore they would be so afraid to come within his power, that he should not be able to give his father bread while the famine lasted. Joseph had also another reason for not

telling his brothers who he was ; he wished to make them feel sorry for the cruel way in which they had treated him, and his father who was so fond of him ; and so Joseph pretended at first to treat his brothers very roughly, and even put them in prison for three days, and this brought to their remembrance their unkind treatment of their young brother Joseph, and they said to each other that they deserved

Gen. } to suffer for it. After a time, Joseph
xlv. } made himself known to his brothers, and he comforted them by showing them how God had turned all that they had done to him to his good ; and he told his brothers what a great man he was, and that Pharaoh was very kind to him. Then Joseph sent to his father to come down into Egypt that he might have him near to him, to provide him with food while the famine lasted. Jacob was very, very glad when he found his son Joseph was still alive, and it must have been a very happy meeting

between them, for they had not seen each other for twenty years. Jacob remained with his son Joseph in Egypt and died there. Joseph lived to be a very old man, so old that nobody reaches such a great age in these days ; seventy is old, and ninety is thought very old, but Joseph lived to be a hundred and ten years old.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Mamma, what are merchants ?

Mamma. They are men who take the produce of one country and sell it or exchange it in another, where the productions are different.

George. Mamma, will you tell me what a jailor is ?

Mamma. A jailor is the man who has the charge of the people who are locked up in prison.

Charles. What is a famine ?

Mamma. There is said to be a famine in the land when corn is very scarce, and bread is very, very dear, and there is very little of it.

Henry. Was it not rather unkind of Joseph to put his brothers into prison ?

Mamma. Perhaps it was rather ; but they quite deserved it ; besides, he did not intend them any real harm, he only wished to frighten them a little.

STORY VI.

THE HISTORY OF MOSES.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”—HEBREWS xi. 6.

CHAPTER I.

MOSES, whose history I will now tell you, was born in Egypt of Israelitish parents, at a time when the King of Egypt had ordered all the sons that were { Exod. i. born to the Israelites to be put to death, because he was become afraid of the people of Israel; for since Joseph's father and his brothers had come down into Egypt in the time of the famine, their sons and grandsons had become very numerous. When Moses was born, his mother hid him for three months, that the king might not find him. At the end of { Exod. ii. that time she was afraid her baby was too

old to be hid any longer, so, like a good and wise woman, she determined to leave her little one to the care of God, and this is what she did: she made a basket of bulrushes, and covered it with pitch to keep out the water; and then she put her little baby in the basket and covered him over, and laid the basket among the flags just at the edge of the river, and told his sister to watch at a distance, and see what became of her dear little boy. By and by the daughter of the King of Egypt came down to bathe in the river, and she saw the little basket, and sent her maids to fetch it. When they opened the basket the baby awoke, and began to cry. It was a very fine and pretty child, and the king's daughter was so pleased with it, and felt so sorry for it, that she said she would take care of it; and she told her maids that she must find a nurse for the little baby. His sister was listening all this time to what was going on, and now she came forward,

and asked if she should bring a nurse ; and when the king's daughter said yes, she went and told her mother all that had occurred ; and what must have been the mother's joy to have her own dear little baby given back to her to nurse ! When Moses was grown old enough and strong enough to leave his mother, she took him to the king's daughter, who had promised to bring him up as her own son ; but when he became a man, he could not be content to be in the king's house, when his friends and relations were being so cruelly treated by the king. He felt that he wished to do something to help them and make them more comfortable, and he was very soon to have his wish gratified, in what way you shall hear. Moses had killed an Egyptian, because he had seen him ill-use an Israelite ; afterwards he was afraid of what he had done, and so he ran away lest the king should kill him. Moses went a long way, and being very tired, he sat down by a well

to rest himself. While he was sitting there, seven women came to draw water for the sheep. Moses helped them to draw the water, and gave it to the sheep for them. The father of the young women was much obliged to Moses for being so attentive to his daughters, and invited him to come home with him. Moses went home with the man, and lived with him, and married one of his daughters. Moses was a shepherd for his father-in-law, and one day when he was

Exod. }
iii. } watching his flocks he noticed a bush on fire, and yet, strange to say, the bush was not burnt. When Moses went near to the bush to look at it, he heard the voice of God speaking to him out of the bush, and telling him not to come too near, but to listen to what God had to say to him. God then told Moses that He knew how badly the King of Egypt was treating the people of Israel, and that He would therefore send them away from Egypt, and would make Moses their leader and guide,

and would deliver them by his hand. God also told Moses that the King of Egypt would be so very unwilling to let the Israelites go away, that He should be obliged to punish him very severely before he would let them go. Moses could scarcely believe that he was to deliver his countrymen from Egypt, and be able { Exod. iv. to do such great things; so God worked two miracles to prove to him that He would be with him, and help him to do all that He desired him to do. The first miracle was changing the shepherd's staff which Moses carried into a serpent, and then making it a staff again; the other miracle was causing one of Moses' hands to look as if it were covered with a very loathsome disease called leprosy, and then in a moment making his hand quite well again. Moses still felt afraid, and thought he should not be able to persuade Pharaoh the king to let the Israelites go out of Egypt; so God told him that his brother Aaron should go

with him, and help him to talk to Pharaoh. Moses and Aaron were to ask the king if he would let the people of Israel go, and if the king refused, then Moses was to begin to perform wonders before Pharaoh, to show him that God was with them. Now we must leave off, but in the next chapter of this story we shall see how very obstinate the King of Egypt was.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Who were the Israelites, mamma?

Mamma. When Jacob left his uncle Laban to go into his own country, God changed his name from Jacob to Israel, and all his sons and grandsons ever afterwards were called Israelites.

George. What are bulrushes?

Mamma. Bulrushes are a large kind of rush or grass, which grows very high, and by the side of rivers; poor people often

make baskets and the bottoms of chairs with them.

Charles. What is pitch, mamma? and what did you mean when you said that the woman laid the basket among the flags? What flags were they?

Mamma.—Not flags that are carried about on gay days, dear boy; but there is a large yellow flower which grows by the side of rivers that is called a flag. Pitch is produced from a tree called a pine, and is used very much about ships to keep out the water. It has a very strong smell, and you must have often smelt it at the sea-side.

Henry. How was it that the bush was not burned when it seemed to be on fire?

Mamma. Because God made the bush look as if it were on fire, in order to draw the attention of Moses to it, and God kept the bush from being burnt.

Charles. What is a miracle?

Mamma. Anything which is too wonderful for man to do by himself and his own power is called a miracle.

THE HISTORY OF MOSES—*continued.*

CHAPTER II.

THE end of the last chapter told us that

Exod. vii.	}	Moses was going to ask Pharaoh
	}	king of Egypt, to let the

people of Israel go away. Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses, and so the first wonder was performed before him, which was turning his staff into a serpent. Now there were men in Egypt who were called magicians. They were very clever, and could do a great many cunning and wonderful things. By the help of their cunning they pretended to change their rods into serpents. So Pharaoh did not think it wonderful that Moses could change

his staff into a serpent, when he saw that his wise men or magicians could do the same. The next wonder was turning the water of the river into blood, which killed all the fish that were in the river, and the water was so very bad that nobody could use it. But this also the magicians pretended to copy, so Pharaoh did not think much of it. The next wonder performed { Exod.
viii.
by Moses was bringing such a large number of frogs on the land, that every place, even the rooms in the houses, were full of them; and the frogs were in the people's beds, and in the ovens, and in every place. Pharaoh did not like the frogs, neither could his wise men send them away; so he promised Moses that if he would send the frogs away, he would let the people of Israel go. But when Moses had sent away the frogs, and they were left nowhere but in the river, Pharaoh broke his promise, and would not let the Israelites go. The frogs being so numerous,

they were called a plague, and a great many more plagues followed before Pharaoh would obey God. The next we read of was that every part of the land was covered with lice, which are a very disagreeable insect, with a bad smell. Still Pharaoh would not listen to Moses; he was so very obstinate. Pharaoh was then plagued by every place being covered with swarms of flies, and this plague was so very bad that Pharaoh said if Moses would send the flies away, he would let the people of Israel go. Moses sent them away, and again Pharaoh

Exod. } broke his promise. The next plague
ix. } was a very bad disease among all the animals, so bad that they all died. It was extraordinary that Pharaoh could be so obstinate to have all these troubles come upon him rather than obey God; but so it was, he would not yet listen to Moses. The next plague was a very dreadful one; it was that all the people of Egypt were covered with boils, which are very sore and

painful; but Pharaoh was so wicked that even this dreadful plague did not make him repent, and wish to please God. By the next plague all the animals that were out in the fields, and the trees, and the grass, and the barley, were quite destroyed by a very heavy storm of hail. Pharaoh was afraid at this dreadful storm, and again promised Moses to let the Israelites go. But when Moses prayed to God, and the hail ceased, Pharaoh forgot his fears and his promise, and would not let the people go. The next plague was of locusts, which are rather large insects, some- { Exod. x. thing like a cockchafer. They move about in great numbers, and settle down upon a large piece of ground to feed, and when they rise off the ground there is not a bit of grass or a flower to be seen—all is quite bare. The locusts which God sent into Egypt were in such numbers that they ate up every bit of green thing that had not been destroyed by the storm of hail.

Pharaoh was again afraid, again promised to let the Israelites go, and again broke his promise when the locusts were sent away. God then made the whole land of Egypt -so very very dark that there was no light whatever to be seen, and the people could not move for the darkness; but so very wicked and obstinate was Pharaoh that even this affliction and punishment from God did not make him repent, and he still refused to obey, and let the Israelites go out of his country. In the next chapter I will read you an account of the last and greatest plague of all of them.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Mamma, I should like to count how many plagues we have read about in this chapter.

Mamma. Do my dear boy, and I will help you: the first was the frogs; second, the lice; third, the flies; then the sickness and death amongst the animals; fifth, the

boils upon the people ; sixth, the storm of hail ; then the locusts, and then the great darkness ; that is eight plagues, besides the turning of the water into blood, that God sent to punish Pharaoh, and yet he was so wicked and obstinate that he suffered all that misery rather than do as God told him to do.

George. What is hail ?

Mamma. You have often noticed something falling in little white lumps, like sugar plums ; they are hailstones, and are frozen drops of rain ; the hailstones that fell and killed the animals belonging to the Egyptians must have been very large indeed.

THE HISTORY OF MOSES—*continued.*

CHAPTER III.

Now we are going to read of the last plague which God sent upon { Exod.
xii.

Pharaoh, and which was a very dreadful and severe one, and brought him great sorrow; the king, and everybody among the Egyptians, lost their eldest child, and all died in one night; this great trouble made Pharaoh repent at last; and now he was very anxious to get rid of the Israelites, lest all the other children should die, so he sent them away in such a hurry that they could not stop to prepare themselves any food, and they were obliged to take their dough with them to eat instead of bread on their journey. It was such a great day when the Israelites at last left Egypt that God told them always to remember it, and when the day came round every year, God told them to eat their bread in the same unmade state that it was in when they left Egypt in a hurry. This feast with the unmade bread they were to call the Passover. It was so called, because when God caused all the eldest children of the Egyptians to die, He

passed over the houses of the Israelites and did not cause any of their children to die. Now, though Pharaoh had sent the people of Israel away, he { ^{Exod.} _{xiv.} could not be content when he found they really had left, without trying to bring them back again, so he went after them with his soldiers; Pharaoh went after them very fast, and soon overtook them, and the Israelites thought they could not escape, for the wide sea was before them, and they had no ships to cross it in. But God, to save his people from Pharaoh, worked a great wonder; while they were thinking what they should do to escape from the cruel king, and how they could cross the sea, God told Moses to order the people to go on through the sea, and when they obeyed, and walked into the sea, God gathered all the waters in two great heaps on each side of the Israelites, like two walls of water, and the people walked between the two walls on dry ground,

although they were in the middle of the sea. When Pharaoh saw the dry ground where the waters had been, he and all his soldiers went in after the Israelites, with their horses and their carriages, but when they were in, the water went back to its proper place, and they were every one of them drowned in the sea; but the Israelites passed over quite safely to the other side, and stepped upon dry land.

Moses led the people of Israel for forty years, the whole of which long time they wandered about in the wilderness, as a punishment, because they so frequently disobeyed God. God worked a great many

Exod.	}	miracles for his people while they
xvi.		

journeyed in the wilderness. When they had no food, He sent them some from heaven every day, which was called manna;

Exod.	}	and when they were thirsty, and
xvii.		

could find no water, God caused some to run from a hard rock for them to drink. It was while the Israelites were

in the wilderness that God gave to
Moses the ten commandments, { Exod.
xx.
which you learn in your catechism; they
were written by Moses upon two
pieces of stone called tables. Moses { Exod.
xxxi.
went to the top of a mountain to hear
what God had to say to him, and to write
the commandments; he was on the
mountain forty days and forty { Exod.
xxxiv.
nights, and when he came down to the
people his face was so very bright from
talking with God that they could { Exod.
xxxiv.
not look on him, their eyes were
so dazzled, as yours will be if you try to
look at the bright sun: Moses covered
his face with a veil, and then the people
were able to look at him. We will now
leave the rest of the life and doings of
Moses till next time.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Mamma, you read about one

more plague in this chapter, and that makes ten altogether, I think ?

Mamma. Yes, you are quite right, dear boy ; and a very dreadful plague it was for every one to lose a dear child.

Charles. What is dough, mamma ?

Mamma. When cook makes the bread she mixes up flour and water, and turns it about with her hands till all the flour is well mixed together, and is quite soft, so that it can be rolled up into loaves or cakes ; the flour in this state is called dough ; but before it is fit to be put into the oven and baked for bread there is something called yeast, or leaven, to be put to it, which makes the dough rise and fit to make nice light bread : when the Israelites left Egypt in such a hurry they were obliged to eat the dough before any yeast or leaven had been put to it, because they had no time to mix it up properly ; and so it was called unleavened bread.

George. What is a wilderness, mamma ?

Mamma. A very wild, dreary part, where nobody lives, only wild animals; and sometimes there are very few animals, and then there is very little food to be had, and scarcely any water.

THE HISTORY OF MOSES—*ended.*

CHAPTER IV.

WE will now, dear children, finish this interesting story of Moses. After the people of Israel had been in the wilderness some years they became tired of having only manna to eat, and they asked for meat. Moses asked God to give { ^{Num.} xi. them meat to eat, and God sent them quails enough for every day for a month. The Israelites were very wicked and ungrateful, and disobedient to God while they wandered in the wilderness; and God was often obliged to punish them; they were

constantly murmuring and being discontented. Once God saw fit to
 Num. }
 xxi. } punish them by sending poisonous
 serpents among them, which bit a great
 many of the people, and caused their
 deaths; they were very much afraid of
 the serpents, and they were sorry that
 they had displeased God, and so God
 forgave them, and He ordered Moses to
 make a serpent of brass and set it up on
 a pole, and every one who had been bitten
 by the live serpents and looked up at the
 brazen serpent was cured, and did not
 die.

Do you remember, dear children, hearing in the story about Abraham, that God promised him that he and his descendants (that is, all his sons' and grandsons' children) should possess the land of Canaan? It was this land of Canaan that the people of Israel were now going to; but before they could live in it they had to fight and conquer all the kings who lived round

about Canaan, and in it. God helped the Israelites to conquer all their enemies, and made them afraid of them. The people of Israel were now come to { ^{Num.} _{xiii.}

a country called Moab, and the king of the country was named Balak. This king was so afraid of the Israelites, that he sent for a prophet to come and curse them; for he very foolishly thought, that if the people were cursed by a prophet, they would not be able to conquer him, even though God might help them. The prophet that Balak, King of Moab, sent for, was named Balaam; and a very curious thing happened to him when he was going to Balak. I must tell you that Balaam had no business to go to Balak to curse the Israelites, because he very well knew that they were God's people, and that it was His will that they should possess the land of Canaan. Balaam did at first refuse to go with the messengers whom Balak, the king, sent to him; but after-

wards he was tempted by the rich presents offered him by Balak, and he set out one morning to go and curse the Israelites. Balaam rode upon an ass, and this ass saved her master's life. I will tell you how. God was very angry with Balaam for going to curse his chosen people, and He sent an angel with a sword to stand in the way, and kill Balaam. Now, the ass saw the angel with the sword, but her master did not see him; and so, when the poor ass stood still from fright, Balaam was angry with the animal, and hit her with a stick. This he did three times, and then God gave the ass power to speak, and she asked her master why he had hit her so, and if ever she had been obstinate, or refused to go on before, though he had ridden her for a great many years; and Balaam said, "No." Then God opened his eyes, and he saw the angel standing with the sword ready to kill him. And the angel told Balaam, that if it had not

been for the ass turning aside, and refusing to go on, he should have killed him. Balaam then offered to turn back, and go home again; but the angel said, "No," he was to go on and bless the Israelites, instead of cursing them; and { Num. Balaam did bless them three times. { xxiv.

The Israelites were in the wilderness forty years, and when they were come very near to the land of Canaan, Moses died, { Deut. when a hundred and twenty years { xxxiv. old. God did not suffer Moses to take the Israelites into the land of Canaan, because he had been disobedient.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Mamma, what was the manna like that God sent for the people to eat?

Mamma. It was like a very small white cake, and it lay on the ground the first thing in the morning, when the sun rose. The Israelites gathered it every day but Sunday. On that day there was none to

be found; but there was always a double supply to be gathered on Saturday.

Charles. Mamma, what are quails ? .

Mamma. They are birds very like a partridge.

Henry. How was Moses disobedient ?

Mamma. Once, when the people of Israel were very much in want of water, God told Moses to speak to a rock, and that water should flow out of it; Moses, instead of only speaking, struck the rock with his rod; and for this disobedience God punished him, for God requires perfect obedience.

STORY VII.

THE HISTORY OF JOSHUA.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.”—**HEBREWS** xiii. 17.

WHEN Moses was dead, God appointed a man named Joshua to lead the Israelites into Canaan. Joshua { Josh. i.
sent two men to look about a little, and see what kind of place the city of Jericho was, which they had now to conquer. The King of Jericho was angry { Josh. ii.
when he heard that two men were looking about who had been sent by Joshua, and he ordered them to be taken prisoners. However, a woman named Rahab hid the men on the roof of her house, and covered them with the long stalks of flax which she had put there to

dry in the sun; so when the men who were sent by the King of Jericho came to look for Joshua's spies, they could not find them; and as soon as they were gone, Rahab let the spies down from her window by a cord, and they went back to Joshua. The people of Israel had to pass through a river, called the river Jordan, Josh.
iii. } before they could reach the city of Jericho, and God helped them through; for as soon as they set their feet in the water, God caused it to collect in a heap on one side, and the people walked through quite dry. When they Josh.
iv. } reached the other side, Joshua set up twelve stones as a remembrance of the help that God had given the people. God told Joshua that He would give the Josh.
vi. } Israelites the city of Jericho, and that they were to stand before the walls of the city, and blow with trumpets; and when the people blew the trumpets, the walls all fell down that were built

round the town, and the Israelites could then easily go in and take possession of it. Joshua took care that no harm should happen to Rahab and her friends, because she had been so kind to the men he had sent, and had hidden them from the king; but everybody else in Jericho was killed, and all the houses were pulled down, and there was no longer any town.

Joshua led the people of Israel against a great many kings, but he conquered them all, for God helped him to do so in many different ways. One day God sent such very large hailstones that they killed the enemies Joshua was fighting against, and that same day God made the sun and moon to stand still, which means { Josh. x. that night did not come when it usually does, after twelve or fourteen hours of daylight, but the day lasted a much longer time than usual, to give Joshua time to finish conquering the enemies whom he was fighting. When Joshua had destroyed

all the kings who kept the Israelites from entering into the land of Canaan, he led

Josh. }
 xii. to } them into it, to take possession of
 xxiv. } their new country, and he divided the land among all the families, and gave them rules and laws to live by, that they might obey God, and live happily and contented, and be blessed by God. When

Josh. }
 xxiv. } Joshua died he was one hundred and ten years old.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. How could the woman hide men in the roof of her house, mamma?

Mamma. The roofs of the houses were quite flat, like the floor of a room, in those days, so that people could sit or walk upon them; they are built in the same way in some hot countries now; the roofs were used for many purposes, particularly for putting things there to dry.

Charles. Mamma, what is flax?

Mamma. Flax is a plant, my love, with

a very pretty little blue flower ; it is very useful, for the fibres, that is, the threads of which the stem of the flower consists, when dried and beaten out, are so fine that they can be used in spinning ; and they are spun into material for shirts and tablecloths, and many other articles.

Henry. The water of the river Jordan, being all gathered in a heap, that the people might walk through, was like the water of the Red Sea running into two great heaps when the Israelites were leaving Egypt, was it not ?

Mamma. Yes, my love ; and I am very glad to find that you remember and apply what you hear.

George. Mamma, do the sun and moon travel ?

Mamma. No, dear boy ; the sun does not really travel, but stands still. It is, however, usual to speak of the sun as rising and setting every day. When it rises, day begins, and when it sets night begins ; the

moon travels round the earth, and the earth round the sun, and the sun stands still. When it is said in the Bible that the sun and moon stood still, it meant that daylight lasted much longer than it usually does, namely, that the sun did not set so soon. You know what sunset is ; you have often seen the sun like a beautiful red ball, going down behind the hill.

STORY VIII.

OF THE DELIVERERS OF ISRAEL.

“For He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.”—PSALM cvii. 16.

As long as the people of Israel obeyed God they lived happily in their new country and were at peace; but they soon forgot to do all that God had told them, and then trouble came upon them, and they had always one enemy or another to fight against, who wished to take their land away from them. One of the enemies who troubled the Israelites was named Jabin; he was a king; he sent Sisera, the captain of his soldiers, to fight against the Israelites; but God rid his people of Sisera by the hand of a woman named Jael. Sisera was flying from the

Israelitish soldiers who were trying to kill him, and he hid himself in a tent belonging to one of the soldiers of Israel; Jael, who was the wife of the soldier, was in the tent, and told Sisera to come in. He asked for some water to drink, and she gave him some milk, and then he lay down to sleep, for he was very tired. As soon as he was asleep Jael took a nail and a hammer, and hammered the nail into Sisera's head, and killed him; and when the soldiers came to look for Sisera they found him dead in the tent.

One of the captains who led the Israelites to fight their enemies, was named Jephthah; he promised God that if He would enable him to be victorious over his enemies, he would offer to God the first person or thing that he saw coming out of his house when he returned home. God did give Jephthah the victory, but what was his sorrow when, behold, the first person he saw was his own dear daughter

coming to meet him and welcome him home again. Poor man, he was very very sorry, but he could not break the promise he had made to God. Another of the leaders of the Israelites was a very wonderful man. His name was Samson, and he had { Jud. xiv. very great strength; when he was very young he killed a fierce lion; he had no sword, nor even a stick in his hand, he killed the lion with a blow by his strong arm. At one time his enemies tried to take him prisoner, and they bound his hands with very strong cords, but { Jud. xv. Samson broke the cords as easily as if they had only been pieces of thread, and killed his enemies with the jaw-bone of an ass, which he picked up in the way. Another time Samson's enemies thought they had got him shut up quite safely in a house in a town which was secured { Jud. xvi. by great gates; but he carried away the gates on his back up to the top of a high hill, and got away. It was very curious

that Samson's great strength was in the hair of his head, which was very thick and curly; his enemies found this out after some time, and one day when he was asleep, they cut off his hair, and then they easily took him prisoner, for without his hair Samson was not stronger than any other man. His enemies behaved very cruelly to him; they put out his eyes, and shut him up in prison. After Samson had been in prison some time, his hair grew again, and then his great strength came back to him; and one day when he was taken to amuse a great number of people by his feats of strength, he pulled the house down upon them all, and upon himself, and he and every one that was in the house was killed, and so ended the life of this wonderful man.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Was it not very cruel of Jael to drive a nail into the man's head?

Mamma. It does seem a cruel thing, particularly for a woman to do, dear boy; but it was done for a good purpose, and is not the only instance in the Bible of one of the enemies of God's people being killed by a woman. I dare say Jael felt that she ought not to lose the opportunity of ridding her countrymen of the man who wished to kill them all.

Charles. Mamma, did Jephthah kill his daughter?

Mamma. It is not certain, my love; we are not actually told that he killed her; but the Bible says that he promised to offer as a burnt-offering whatever he first saw; now a burnt-offering was placed upon the altar, and burnt with fire that was lighted under it.

George. How large were the gates that Samson carried away upon his back?

Mamma. Larger and heavier a great

deal than those of the farmer's largest barn in the village ; and those would be a good deal too heavy for any man living to carry on his back.

STORY IX.

THE HISTORY OF RUTH.

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love."—COLOSSIANS ii. 2.

THE story I am now going to read to you, dear children, is about a young woman named Ruth. Ruth is a { ^{Ruth} _i pretty name, and it is a very pretty story. In consequence of a famine in Canaan, a man of Bethlehem with his wife, Naomi, and two sons went to reside in the land of Moab. The sons each took a wife of the women of the country, one named Orpah, and the other Ruth. Naomi's husband and her two sons died while she was still in Moab, and so she was left alone. She wished to return into her own country and

to her own people; and Ruth, her daughter-in-law, went with her, for she was a good and affectionate girl, and she could not be persuaded to leave the lonely Naomi, whose son had been her own husband.

When Naomi and Ruth came into the
 Ruth } land of Canaan, it was harvest time,
 ii. } and so Ruth went out into the fields to glean corn to make bread for her mother. The man in whose field she went to glean took notice of her, and was very kind to her, and told her not to go away, but to sit down and have some dinner with his reapers; and he took care that she should be able to glean a great many ears of corn. Ruth went to glean every day in the same man's fields while the harvest lasted, and she got together a good deal of corn to make into bread.

The man, whose name was Boaz, was
 Ruth } so pleased with Ruth that he made
 iv. } her his wife. She had a son,



RUTH AND BOAZ.

whom they named Obed. Naomi was grandmother to this little boy, and she was very fond of him, and nursed him, and she was glad that Ruth was rewarded for being so affectionate, and not leaving her when she came away from the land of Moab.

QUESTIONS.

Charles. What does to glean mean ?

Mamma. Have you never noticed in the summer time in a field where the corn has been cut several women busy picking up all the ears they can find left on the ground ? Very often some quite little children are as busy as their mothers, and carry home a bundle of corn as big as themselves. These women and children are called gleaners, and they glean or pick up all the loose ears of corn. They take their bundles home, and another day they beat all the grain out of the straw, and get the millers to grind it into flour for them, of which they make bread.

STORY X.

THE HISTORY OF SAMUEL.

“Be ye followers of God, as dear children.”—EPHESIANS v. 1.

SAMUEL, of whom you may have seen a
1 Sam. } picture as a child kneeling in prayer,
1. } was the son of Hannah, a very good
woman, who had lived a great many years
without being blessed with a dear little
child. Hannah often prayed to God to
give her a son, and she promised to give
him to God, by which she meant that he
should be with the High Priest in the
temple. God granted Hannah her wish
at length, and she had a son, and she
named him Samuel. As soon as he was
old enough, Hannah took him with her to
the temple, and left him with the High



THE YEARLY VISIT OF HANNAH AND ELKANAH TO SAMUEL.

[1 SAMUEL, Chap. II., v. 18.]



Priest. Samuel's mother came to see him every year, and brought him a little coat. When he was still a very little boy, not more than eight years old, God called to him three times in the night, when Samuel was asleep. He was too young to know that it was God who called him, so he got up and went to the High Priest, whose name was Eli, to know if he wanted him. The first time Eli told Samuel to go and lie down again, for that he had not called him; but when Samuel came to him three times, he knew that God must have called the child; so he told him to go and lie down again, and if he was called, to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Samuel was called, and he answered as Eli had told him; and then God spoke to him, and told him that He was going to bring great trouble upon Eli, because his sons were so very wicked, and Eli had brought them up so badly. Samuel told Eli all that God

said, and Eli felt that the punishment was just. Samuel grew up to be a very great
 1 Sam. } prophet, and he lived to be an old
 xxv. } man, and died amongst his friends,
 and they were all very sorry when Samuel
 was dead.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. What is a temple ?

Mamma. The same as a church. God's house in those days was called a temple ; now we call it a church.

Charles. Who is meant by the High Priest, mamma ?

Mamma. The person who offered up the sacrifices, and performed the different services of the Temple, was called the High Priest. Those who perform the services of our church are called priests, but more commonly clergymen. Papa is a clergyman.

George. Mamma, have you told us yet what a prophet is ?

Mamma. I think I have, dear boy ; but

I will tell you again to make sure. A prophet is one who, by the power of God, can tell what will happen a very long time before that which has been foretold comes to pass.

Charles. Are there any prophets now, mamma ?

Mamma. No, my dear. There are sometimes men who call themselves prophets, but they are only telling a lie. God does not now give anyone the power to be a prophet ; it is not necessary to us who have the gospel of Jesus Christ.

STORY XI.

THE HISTORY OF DAVID.

“Let no man despise thy youth.”—1 TIMOTHY iv. 12.

DAVID, about whom we are now going to
<sup>1 Sam. }
xvi. }</sup> read, was the son of Jesse and the
grandson of RUTH, whose pretty story
I hope you remember. David played very
beautifully upon the harp, and often used to
play to Saul, who was king of the Israelites.
While David was quite a lad, a very great
<sup>1 Sam. }
xvii. }</sup> man came to fight the Israelites;
his name was Goliath; he was called
a giant, because he was such a very large,
strong man. When Goliath came to fight
the Israelites, he thought they would all
be afraid of him because of his great
strength, and that they would not fight
him, and that he should kill them all with,



DAVID AND GOLIATH.



out any trouble. However, David was not afraid of the great giant, young as he was, for he felt quite sure that God would help him to conquer Goliath; so David told him that he would come and fight him. The giant laughed when he saw such a mere boy coming to fight against him, and asked him if he knew what he was about, for that he would be sure to lose his life. David answered Goliath that he knew very well what he was about, and that God would deliver him into his hands. David said that one time, when he was minding his father's sheep, a lion and a bear came out of the wood to kill the sheep; but that God had given him strength to kill the lion and the bear, and that he felt sure the same God would give him strength to kill the giant who was come to trouble Israel. Now Goliath had a very large sword to fight with, but David had no sword; he only took some smooth stones out of a brook and his sling, and with this only he

went to kill the giant. When Goliath drew his sword, and ran towards David to cut him down with it, David took a stone and put it in his sling, slung it, and the stone went into Goliath's forehead, and he fell down; then David ran and took Goliath's sword from him, and cut off his head with it, and carried it to Saul the <sup>2 Sam. }
ii. }</sup> king. When Saul died, David was made King of Israel, and then it was he wrote the beautiful Psalms which we read every morning, and which are called the Psalms of David.

QUESTIONS.

Charles. Mamma, was David a shepherd?

Mamma. Yes, my love, he was; almost everyone was a shepherd in those days, because there were so many flocks of sheep to look after.

Henry. What is a sling?

Mamma. A sling is made of a small

piece of leather, with a string fixed to each end. A stone is placed in the leather; then, by the strings, it is quickly swung round, one of the strings is dropped, and with a jerk the stone flies out with great force.

George. Are there any giants now, mamma?

Mamma. No, my love; at least not any like the giants who lived in these early days. We sometimes hear of a person being called a giant, because he is much taller and larger than other people.

STORY XII.

THE HISTORY OF ELIJAH.

"They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."—
MARK xvi. 18.

ELIJAH was a prophet, which means, I hope
1 Kings } you will remember, one who fore-
xvii. } tells things that are going to happen.
Elijah first of all foretold that there would
be no rain in Israel for a long time—not
for three years. This was to punish Ahab
the king, who was very wicked. Without
rain to water the ground, the grass could
not grow for the cattle to eat, neither
could the corn which made the bread for
the people to eat, so there was a great
scarcity of food. Elijah went and lived
by a little brook, and God told him
that ravens should bring him food night

and morning; and so they did. Every morning the ravens brought bread and meat, and every evening they brought bread and meat, and set it down by Elijah.

After some little time, however, the brook dried up because there had been no rain, and Elijah was obliged to leave it, for he could get no water. God told him to go to a widow who lived in a town called Zarephath, and that she should lodge him and give him food while the famine lasted. Elijah went and found out the widow, and when he came to her cottage she was preparing to make her last cake for her son and herself; and she had made up her mind that when the cake was gone, she and her son must die, for all their flour would be gone, and she would not be able to buy any more. Elijah asked the woman to make him a cake first, and afterwards to prepare for herself and her son, and she did so; and though she had only a handful of

flour in her barrel, yet all the time Elijah was with her they had plenty of food; there was always meal, or flour, in the barrel, although the widow did not put any more in: this was a miracle worked by God for the sake of his holy prophet. Whilst Elijah was living with the widow, her son died, but the prophet made him alive and well again, by the power which God gave him; and the poor woman was very, very pleased and thankful when she saw her dear and only son sitting up again.

^{2 Kings}
^{i.} } Now there was a very wicked king of Israel who hated Elijah because of his goodness, and because, as a prophet and a holy man, he often thought it right to reprove the king for being so wicked. It happened that this king was very ill, and Elijah said that he would not recover, but would die; the king was so angry with Elijah for foretelling that he would die, that he sent some soldiers to take the prophet prisoner; but

Elijah called down fire from heaven which killed the soldiers.

God ordered Elijah to go over { 2 Kings
the river Jordan, and when he came ii.
to the river he beat the waters with his cloak, and the waters divided on each side, and left a dry passage for Elijah to walk across. Elijah did not die, but God took him up into heaven in a chariot and horses of fire, and he was not seen any more upon the earth. Now my children for questions.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Did Elijah tell the poor widow that she should have enough to eat, if she made him a cake?

Mamma. Yes he did, my love, and it was very right of the woman to believe what the prophet said, and not refuse him food; she was rewarded for it; for she would not have been able to make any more cakes, if she had refused to

give some to Elijah; neither would her son have been restored to life when he died.

Charles. Why did Elijah call down fire to burn the soldiers?

Mamma. The only way in which he could save himself was, by asking God to destroy the soldiers, for he was only one man against a great many who had swords to fight with.

Henry. Was not the water being divided by Elijah like the water dividing to let Joshua and the Israelites pass over Jordan?

Mamma. Yes, my love, it was the same kind of miracle; and I am very glad to find you remember so well what you have heard; that is the way to increase your knowledge.

George. How could Elijah go to heaven in a carriage?

Mamma. It was a miracle, dear boy. Elijah rose up to heaven on the clouds,

and while God was raising him up, there was the appearance in the sky of a chariot and horses of fire, which was seen by those who stood on the earth and watched Elijah.

STORY XIII.

THE HISTORY OF ELISHA.

"If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."—
JOHN xiv. 14.

I AM now going to read to you about another prophet of God, whose name resembles that of Elijah. One of the first things the Bible tells us about Elisha is, that one day some very naughty children mocked him, and called him names because he was bald; he was angry, and God was very angry with the children, and He caused two great bears to come out of a wood and kill those rude boys. The first miracle Elisha

2 Kings } worked was to cause water to appear
iii. } for the soldiers and the horses of
the king of Judah, when they had gone a
very long journey, and could not find any.



THE BOY GOES TO HIS FATHER BESIDE THE REAPERS.

[3 Kings, Chap. iv., v. 18.]

Then Elisha helped a poor widow who was in great distress because her husband was dead, and she could { ^{2 Kings} _{iv.} not earn money enough to pay her rent; Elisha helped her by making a small jar of oil increase to so great a quantity that she sold it, and got money to pay her debts.

After this Elisha went to lodge with a man and his wife who had no children: Elisha asked God to give them a son, and God granted the request, and they had a son. In the summer time the little boy went out with his father to see the reapers reaping the corn; the sun was too hot for the poor little fellow, and it made him ill; he was brought home and laid upon his bed, and he was so ill that he died; the poor mother went in great distress to Elisha to see if he could do anything for her, and he, by God's help, made her little son alive again.

Soon after the little boy was restored

to life, there was a famine in the land, and Elisha and his friends were obliged to be content with soup made of herbs. One day the servant, who was sent to pick the plants, gathered a poisonous one by mistake, and put it into the soup; so when the people eat the soup it made them ill; however, Elisha cured them, and took away the poison from the soup, and made it good and fit to eat.

Some kind friend sent Elisha as a present a few ears of corn, and a few barley-loaves. Elisha did not keep them for himself, but by the power which God gave him, he made these few loaves and ears enough to satisfy a hundred men.

The next good work Elisha did was to
 2 Kings } cure a man of a very dreadful disease
 v. } called leprosy; the man's name was Naaman. Elisha told him to go and wash in the river Jordan, and when Naaman came out of the water he was quite well; there was nothing at all the matter with him.

Naaman was so much obliged to Elisha for making him well, that he wanted to give him a handsome present, but Elisha would not accept of anything, so Naaman left him to go home. However, Elisha's servant thought it was a pity they should not get some of the fine things which Naaman had offered, so he ran after him, and told him that Elisha his master had changed his mind, and would be very glad of a few of the presents, and Naaman gave them to the servant directly. This was very wrong of the servant, for it was telling an untruth, and when he went back to Elisha he told another untruth, for when asked where he had been, he told Elisha he had not been anywhere. Elisha knew his servant was saying what was not true, for he knew where he had been, and what he had been doing, and for a punishment he caused the dreadful disease of which he had just cured Naaman to afflict his servant.

One day, as some men were cutting
 2 Kings } down trees for wood to build with,
 vi. } the axe fell into a river, which
 ran by the side of the wood. Now the
 part of the axe which cleaves or cuts the
 wood is made of iron, which is very heavy,
 and will not float upon the water like your
 little boats do, but goes down to the bot-
 tom, where it cannot be seen. These poor
 men were very sorry when they lost the
 axe, for it was not theirs; some one had
 lent it to them. So they told Elisha what
 their trouble was, and he made the axe
 float and come up to the top of the water,
 and the men picked it out, and were very
 glad to find it again.

After Elisha was dead and buried,
 2 Kings } another man, who died some time
 xiii. } after, was put into the same grave
 in which Elisha had been buried; and,
 strange to say, when the dead body touched
 Elisha's bones, life came back to the body,
 and the man sat up.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. What are herbs ?

Mamma. Parsley, and mint, and sage, and the pretty little flower called thyme are all herbs, and there are several others.

George. What is poison, mamma ?

Mamma. Some plants, such as the nightshade, and some insects and reptiles, such as the wasp and the adder, make people so ill when they eat of them or are stung by them, as often to cause death ; and therefore they are called poisonous, because they are not fit to eat, and are dangerous to touch.

Charles. How did Elisha know that his servant was telling him an untruth ?

Mamma. God gave Elisha the knowledge of where his servant had been, and of what he had been doing.

Henry. Are dead men ever made alive again now ?

Mamma. No, my love, when people die now, they are buried in the churchyard, and we see no more of them, for there are no prophets living now with power to work miracles. But everybody who is dead and buried will be made alive again some day, when Jesus Christ will come to judge us all. After that day every one will live for ever and ever ; not die, or be buried, any more ; but it will be only those who have loved God, and had their sins forgiven them, who will be happy.

STORY XIV.

THE HISTORY OF DANIEL.

“The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”—HEBREWS xiii. 6.

WE will now, dear children, read a little about Daniel, of whom you have { ^{Dan.}
often heard, that he was once put { ^{i.}
into a lion's den. When Daniel was a little child, he was taken away from his own country, and most likely from his parents ; and because he was a fine child, well grown, quick, and clever, he was brought up as servant to the king, who had taken him and others prisoners.

Daniel feared God, and thought of Him, though he was but a child, and so God was with him, and gave him

power to foretell events, and to explain
 Dan. } dreams. You know what is meant
 ii. } by a dream. When in your sleep
 you think you are doing or saying something, while all the time you are firm asleep, you are dreaming. The king whom Daniel served had a dream, which he could not remember. Daniel pleased him very much by telling him what the dream was, and what it meant; and the king made Daniel a very great man, and a ruler, which means one who governs and directs others. The king did not love and serve God as Daniel did, for he was an idolater.

About this time Nebuchadnezzar ordered
 Dan. } an image of gold to be made, and
 iii. } said that everybody must fall down
 and worship it; and every one who did not, was to be thrown into a very large fire called a furnace. Three Jews, who, at Daniel's request, had lately been set over the affairs of the country, named Shadrach, Meshach,

and Abednego, refused to fall down before this image, because they feared God, and He has forbidden all idolatry. Then was the king full of fury, and he commanded that the furnace should be heated, and these three men be bound and thrown in. The fire was made so very hot that the men who threw them in were burnt; but God was with these young men, and kept them from being hurt by the fire; and the king was so astonished to see that the men were not hurt by that great fire, that he called to them to come out, and he owned that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, must be more great and powerful than all his gods of wood and gold.

Daniel was made a great deal of by the different kings for his wisdom; but he never forgot God, or let anything make him disobey his commands. A king { Dan. vi.
named Darius was now Daniel's
master, and he loved him so much, that he made him the chief ruler of all his kingdom;

this caused the best of the great men to be very jealous of Daniel, and they tried to make the king dislike him ; but they did not succeed, for Daniel was so good, and the king was so fond of him, that he would not listen to any tales against him. These men were determined to try and bring Daniel into disgrace, and they thought the only way to succeed, would be to get Darius the king to order him to disobey God ; so they persuaded the king to make a law that no one should pray to God, but that whoever did, should be cast into a den of lions. They felt pretty certain that Daniel would rather disobey the king than not pray to God ; and they were right. Daniel prayed to God three times a day ; and the men went and told the king that Daniel had disobeyed his command. The king was very sorry for this ; but he thought he must do what he said he should, so he ordered Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den ; he was thrown in at their



THE KING VISITS DANIEL.

supper time, when they were very hungry. The king was very unhappy all night, and could not sleep for thinking of Daniel; and very early in the morning he got up and went to the door of the den and called to Daniel, to see if he were alive or dead. How surprised and pleased he must have been when he heard Daniel's voice, saying, "O king, live for ever, God hath shut the mouths of the lions, that they have not hurt me." So Daniel came out of the den, and the king ordered all those men who had been so unkind to Daniel to be thrown into the den, and the lions killed and eat them directly, for they were very hungry. The Bible does not give any account of Daniel's death; we only read that he prospered from this time, and that God made known to him many events which would come to pass.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. What is an idolater?

Mamma. One who instead of praying to God makes figures of stone, or wood, or anything else, and prays to them as if they could help him, or do him any good.

Charles. Is an image a figure?

Mamma. Yes, my love.

Henry. Why did Darius order Daniel to be put into the lion's den, if he did not wish it, mamma?

Mamma. It was the law of the country over which Darius was king, that when once a law was made, it was never to be broken; this was very wrong and foolish, for only God's laws are so perfect that they never should be broken. The law made by King Darius that nobody should pray to God was made for a bad purpose, and to please bad men; and therefore it would have been much better to have broken than to have kept it.

George. Was it not cruel of the king to order the men to be thrown into the den for the lions to eat?

Mamma. Yes, dear boy, it was certainly very cruel, but it was quite just ; it was only serving them as they had wished to serve poor Daniel. Darius had not been taught by Jesus Christ to have mercy, and to return good for evil.

Charles. Thank you, dear mamma, I like the story about poor Daniel ; how afraid he must have been when he saw the lions ! What is meant by their den ?

Mamma. Lions were kept in those days alive in very strong places generally underground ; the places were large enough to hold two or three lions, and there was an iron grating to let in light. These lions were let loose in a large enclosed place, called an amphitheatre sometimes, to fight with other animals or men for the amusement of the people. Daniel would have been very much afraid if he had not trusted in God ; but he felt sure that God could keep him from being harmed just as well in the lions' den as in his own house. We

have now finished the stories out of the Old Testament, or, as I told you at the beginning, about persons who lived before Jesus Christ came into the world. Another day I will begin to read to you some stories which shall be taken from the New Testament, and be about our Saviour Jesus Christ and his disciples.

Second Series.



STORIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.



SECOND SERIES.

THE stories that I am now going to read to you, dear children, are all taken from the New Testament, or that part of the Word of God which tells us of the sayings and doings of Jesus Christ while He was on the earth. The New Testament is not placed immediately after the story of Daniel, which was the last of the Old Testament stories: there are several books of prophecy. But it would not be easy to write stories upon that portion of the Bible, or upon the Book of Psalms, neither could you understand a very great deal of what

is written in those books. First of all, I will tell you about our Saviour Jesus Christ being born into the world as a little baby.

You must never forget, dear children, that Jesus Christ is the well-beloved Son of God, who made heaven and earth, and all things that are in them; but He left the glories of heaven, and came down and lived upon the earth for a time for the good of you and me, and everybody who lives, and has lived, and will live in the world. You remember, I hope, the first story from the Old Testament, which I read to you about Adam and Eve's disobedience, and that disobedience bringing the punishment of death upon themselves and all mankind. It was to take away this punishment that Jesus Christ came down from heaven and died upon the cross; true, everybody must die now and be buried; but one day all will live again; and those who have in all things

obeyed God's will, following the precepts, or teaching, of Jesus Christ, and lived according to the example He gave, will live with Him in heaven for ever and ever.

STORY I.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.”—ISAIAH ix. 6.

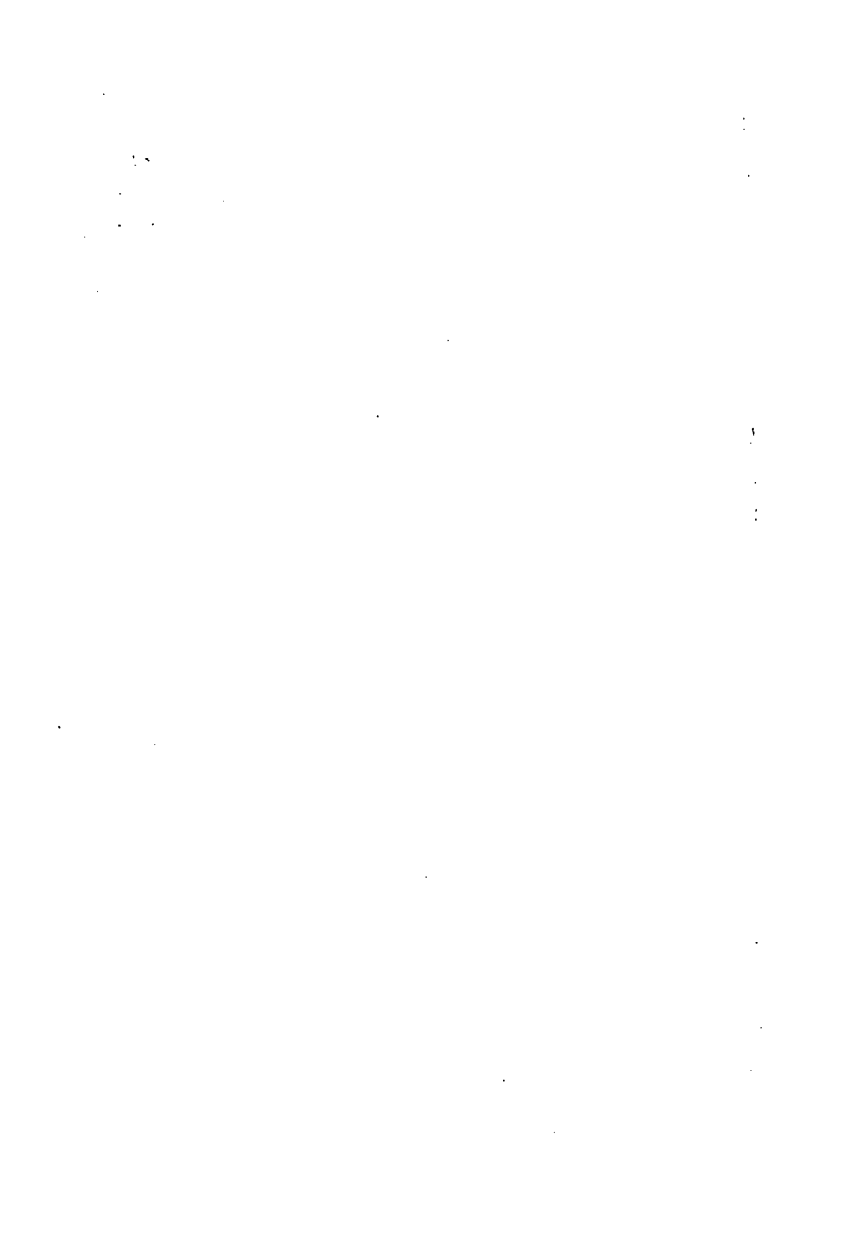
THE mother of Jesus Christ was called

Matt.	}	Mary. She was a poor woman, but
i.		
Luke		
i.		very pure and good; she married
		a carpenter named Joseph; they

lived in a cottage in a town called Nazareth,
and in a country called Galilee. A little
while before Jesus Christ was born, Mary

Luke	}	and her husband were obliged to go
ii.		

into another country called Judea,
to a town called Bethlehem, and while they
were there, Mary gave birth to the Saviour
of the world. The town of Bethlehem was
very very full, for a great many people were
obliged to go there upon the same business





THE SHEPHERDS SEE THE STAR.

which took Joseph and Mary there; and as they were poor people they could not be lodged in the rooms of the inn, but they had a bed made up for the night in the stable.

You would think a stable a very rough bedroom for a cold winter night; however, it was better than none, and the stables in that country were not at all like ours, but were much larger, and often had rooms round the enclosure. During the night Mary's little baby was born, and when she had dressed him in the swaddling clothes, she made a bed for him in the manger. I daresay the holy babe slept very happily in its lowly bed, for its mother and the holy angels were watching over it. That same night there were some shepherds keeping watch over their sheep in Judea. While these poor shepherds were thus employed an angel appeared to them, and told them that Jesus Christ was born, and that He was lying in a manger in the stable belong-

ing to the inn at Bethlehem. The angel also said that it was very joyful news that he had told them, for that this holy child would bring peace and happiness among them, and save them from the punishment brought into the world by sin. When the angel was gone, the shepherds said they should like to go to Bethlehem and see the wondrous babe; so they went and found Him in the manger. We commemorate the birth of Christ on the 25th of December, and therefore call that day Christ-mas. Now my first story is ended.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. One of our little hymns is about Mary and Joseph living at Nazareth. It begins—

At Nazareth, in olden time, a peasant's cottage stood,
Where Joseph, the poor carpenter, toiled for his daily food.

Mamma. Yes, Joseph was the husband of Mary, but Jesus had no earthly father.

George. How did the shepherds find out the right place to see Jesus ?

Mamma. The angel had told them He would be found lying in a manger, and I have no doubt they searched about diligently till they came to the right place, and very probably a light from heaven guided them.

STORY II.

THE PRESENTATION—CRUELTY OF HEROD.

“A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping ; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.”—JEREMIAH xxxi. 15.

WHEN Jesus was a few weeks old, his
Luke }
ii. } parents took Him into the Temple
to present Him to the Lord, and in
the Temple at the time was a very old man,
whose name was Simeon, and who feared
and loved God. He took the holy babe in
his arms, and gave God thanks for having
been permitted to see Christ, and said he
was now quite ready to die ; the words he
used form part of the evening prayers. The
Herod who was king of the Jews at the
time Jesus Christ was born, heard that it
was said by the wise men that a king was

to be born about this time, and that his birth was to take place at Bethlehem, and he inquired more particularly concerning the birth when these wise men came to Jerusalem, which they did on their way to seek the child Jesus. They took a very long journey for the purpose, { Matt. ii. and were guided on their way by a star which shone before them until it stood over the place where the young child was. They entered, and fell down and worshipped Jesus, offering him rich presents. These men had told Herod that the child whom they were seeking was to be king of the Jews, and he thought that his crown and kingdom were to be taken away from him by this child ; so he determined in his own heart to cause his destruction, and he desired the wise men to bring him full information concerning Jesus on their return. But God, who knew what was in his heart, prevented his wicked intentions from being carried out, by making the wise

men return to their homes by a different way. When Herod found the wise men did not appear, and thinking still to have his own way, he gave a most cruel command to his soldiers—namely, to kill all the male children in Bethlehem who were not more than two years old, intending by this means to secure the death of Jesus Christ. But God again prevented the fulfilment of his wicked designs, as far as Jesus was concerned, by appearing to Joseph in a dream, and telling him to take Mary and the young child and flee into Egypt, and stay there until Herod was dead. Joseph at once prepared to do as God had ordered him ; so when Herod's wicked and cruel command to kill all the innocent children was carried out, Jesus Christ was safe with his mother in Egypt, and there they remained until the death of Herod, after which time they returned into the land of Israel ; not into Judea, but into Galilee, and back again to Nazareth.

When Jesus was twelve years old, He went with his parents to Jerusalem, to the Temple, to keep the Passover, an account of which I gave you in the { Luke ii. Old Testament stories, and which I hope you remember. It was usual for friends and relations to journey to Jerusalem in parties or companies, and in this way did Mary and the holy child travel from Nazareth to keep the feast. The distance was great, and it took several days to perform the journey. The feast of the Passover lasted a week : at the end of that time the different parties set out on their journey home again, and Mary and Joseph went a whole day's journey without discovering that Jesus was not with them. When at length they missed Him, they went about from one friend and companion to another, thinking to find Jesus with them ; and when they looked in vain, for He was nowhere to be found, they at once began the journey back again to

Jerusalem. At length they entered the Temple, and saw Jesus sitting with the doctors, or wise Pharisees, not only learning from them, but teaching them, and thereby showing his divine wisdom. It was not until after three days' search that Mary and Joseph found Jesus, so we may believe how sad their hearts must have been all that time, and you, my dear children, may learn from the ending of this sacred story a lesson of filial obedience, or duty to your parents; for the Bible tells us that the holy child went back to Nazareth with his father and mother, and was subject to them, which means that He was obedient to them in everything.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Who were the wise men?

Mamma. They are generally believed to have been eastern kings. They found out all they could about the stars and other heavenly bodies.

Charles. I should like you to tell me again, mamma, if you please, what the Passover was.

Mamma. I am glad you have asked me, my boy, if you do not remember well; it is always best to know everything correctly. The feast of the Passover was kept by the Jews in remembrance of that night in Egypt when God slew all the firstborn of the Egyptians, and passed over, or spared, all the families of the Israelites, the doors of their houses being sprinkled with the blood of a lamb.

George. Who took care of Jesus all the time his mother lost Him?

Mamma. You must try to understand, my boy, that Jesus was God as well as man, and in his own holy temple He was quite safe; and I dare say the priest attended to his wants, for there was always a priest to minister or serve in the temple both day and night.

Henry. If the people had to travel on

foot to Jerusalem, and it was such a long journey, how did they manage for rest and food?

Mamma. They carried tents with them, which is the custom to this day in all the Eastern countries. At the end of a day's journey, and in a convenient place, the tents were pitched, and the food was then cooked and eaten, and the night was passed in the tents.

STORY III.

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."—ISAIAH xl. 3.

THERE was a little boy born a few months before Jesus Christ, who was named John. He was brought up in a way very different from that of most little boys, for { Luke
from a very very early age he lived { i.
alone in the deserts, and his food was that with which the desert supplied { Mark
him, honey and locusts. John was { i.
a holy child, and he was born for a great purpose, namely, to preach to people and prepare them, so that they might be ready and willing to listen to Jesus Christ { Matt.
when He came among them. John { iii.
baptized all who repented of their sins,

and wished to lead a better life, and therefore he is called John the Baptist. He baptized them in the river Jordan with water, but he could not give God's Holy Spirit to them; but when Jesus Christ was baptized by John in the same river,

Mark
i. } the Holy Ghost came down in the form of a dove, proving to the people that He was truly the Son of God.

John the Baptist's ministry was cut short
Luke
iii. } by his being cast into prison by Herod, the king, who could not

bear to be reproved by him for his great wickedness. However, though Herod put John in prison, he listened sometimes to his reproofs, and even felt a wish to amend his ways; and he would very likely after a time have been sorry that he had been so cruel, and would have set John at liberty again; but Herodias, the wife of Herod,

Matt.
xiv. } hated John, because she was living in sin, and one who is living a very wicked life generally hates the righteous

man, because his goodness is a constant reproof. Herodias, therefore, was determined that John should be put to death, and one day when her daughter danced before Herod to amuse him, he was so pleased with her, that he told her he would give her anything she liked to ask for, even to the half of his kingdom ; but when she went to consult her mother, *she* made her daughter ask for the head of John the Baptist, to gratify her own feeling of hatred, and her desire to be rid of the servant of God, and her reprover. Herod was sorry, but he sent an executioner to the prison to behead John, and the bleeding head was laid in a dish and given to the young girl, who took it to her mother. It must have been a dreadful present to receive, and it is difficult to imagine how a young girl could take it, or ask for it, even though her mother had bade her do so. The friends and followers of John took his mangled body and buried it in a tomb ; and thus so

cruelly ended the life of this good and holy man, called the forerunner of Christ.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. Were not locusts a very funny kind of food ?

Mamma. We should think them so, because we are quite unaccustomed to eat such things ; but I believe there is one kind that is very good eating, and I remember reading an account of some traveller in the East collecting them for food for himself and his dogs when a swarm passed over the way he was travelling.

Charles. I should not like that cruel woman to be my mamma. What was her name ?

Mamma. Herodias. She was indeed both a wicked and a cruel woman.

George. But why did Herod order his servants to put John to death when he knew it was cruel, just to please a girl ?

Mamma. Herod had sworn that he would give her anything she asked for; and an oath was looked upon by the Jews as something that must on no account be broken when once made; but still Herod should not have committed such a wicked and cruel deed, neither should he have made such a rash vow,

STORY IV.

THE TEMPTATION—THE FIRST MIRACLE.

“The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.”—ISAIAH lxi. 1.

As soon as Jesus Christ had been baptized by John in the river Jordan, He went into the wilderness, and there remained
Matt.
iv.
Luke
iv. } forty days and forty nights without food. At the end of that time, when He was very hungry, the devil tried to make our Saviour commit sin; but Jesus knew no sin, because He was God as well as man, and He rebuked Satan, saying, “Get thee behind me.” We must all try to do the same when we are tempted to do that which is wrong, not give way and sin, but say, “Get thee behind me.” The devil tried in three different ways to

tempt Jesus, and each time failed. He told our Saviour to make bread out of stones; to cast Himself down from a high place, and to worship Him, and have for reward the whole world; but though Jesus allowed the devil to try his power against Him, He remained sinless.

After this trial in the wilderness our Saviour returned to Galilee, and began to preach and to work miracles, healing all manner of diseases, and restoring mad people to their right mind; but I will tell you what his very first miracle was. He went one day about this time to a marriage feast, and the bridegroom not being very rich, had not provided sufficient wine for all the guests. While he was wondering how he should supply the want, Jesus Christ supplied it for him, by changing the water of six large water pots, or jars, into wine, which was so good that the { John
ii.
governor of the feast called it the best he had drunk; this miracle Jesus worked at

a town called Cana in Galilee. Our Saviour Christ went one day into the Temple, or house of prayer, and turned out the people who, for convenience' sake, were selling the oxen, sheep, and doves which were used in sacrificing, in the outer courts. Jesus rebuked these people for so profaning the Temple, and said it was a house of prayer, not a den of thieves; meaning that they not only sold where they had no business to sell, but were guilty of cheating those

Matt. } who came to buy. A very great
v. } number of the people came to hear our Saviour preach, and so He went to the top of a mountain where there was room for all to be round Him, and then He preached to them that beautiful sermon called the Sermon on the Mount, which contains the beatitudes, or blessings, which our Saviour pronounced upon all who are meek, and patient, and merciful, and lovers of peace, striving to please God and do his will. After pronouncing who were

blessed, Jesus went on to show men what their duty was to God and to man, namely, that we should be forgiving, and that we should love nothing so much as to keep God's way and do his will. He forbade swearing, all evil speaking, hatred, and revenge. It was at this time that Christ gave the disciples the beautiful prayer which we call the Lord's Prayer, and which expresses in so few words our every want, and all that we ought to pray for. He likewise taught them, by several illustrations, the folly of living for this world only, which must perish, and come to an end, and neglecting the salvation of their souls, and the life eternal. Jesus also taught his disciples, and us through them, that it must be our own sins which we must judge and correct, not those of others ; that we should make all our wants known to God, who cares for us as a father for his children; and that we must seek to show that we are

{ Matt.
vi.

{ Matt.
vii.

disciples of Christ by our lives and actions. Jesus calls the way of life a straight and narrow way, and calls upon his followers to choose it in opposition to the broad way of death.

QUESTIONS.

George. How could Jesus Christ live so long without food, and why did He do so ?

Mamma. He could do it, my love, because He was not only man but God, and God is a spirit who requires not food ; the reason why Christ did so was, that He might know as man what it was to be tempted when weak, that He might feel for us, and help us when we are tempted to sin.

Charles. Why were there so many water pots in the room where the marriage feast was held ?

Mamma. They were used by the Jews to wash themselves ; it was part of the Jewish law that they should be very par-

ticular in washing their hands before eating ; and as they were very exact observers of the law, water for the purpose was always provided at an entertainment.

Henry. What do you mean by an illustration ?

Mamma. An illustration explains in an easy and familiar way something which is required to be understood ; but which without the illustration would not be so plain to the understanding ; for instance, our Saviour explained to his hearers what the folly of thinking only of this world is, by likening those who do so to any one laying up garments for the moth to consume, or heaping up articles that would rust and spoil by keeping.

STORY V.

OF MANY MIRACLES.

“The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.”—ISAIAH xxxiii. 24.

JESUS was constantly healing the sick; when He came down from the mountain

Matt. }
viii. } He cleansed a leper who had perhaps been listening to the Saviour's words apart from the multitude; for the leprosy was such a loathsome and fearful disease, that a person afflicted with it was pronounced unclean, and not allowed to mix with his fellow-creatures. Jesus then healed two men who were sick with palsy; one was the servant of a Roman centurion, whom Jesus healed without seeing; and the other was a man who was brought to Jesus by his friends, and let

down in his bed, through the roof, into the room where Christ was engaged in healing those who came to Him. { Mark ii.

After this, Jesus went and abode with Peter in his house, which was by the sea-side. He found illness in the house,

for Peter's mother-in-law was suffering from fever; but as soon as Jesus { Matt. viii.
Luke iv.

saw her He healed her. How thankful Peter must have been to have such a guest! Thus our Saviour's time was constantly employed for the good of others; but, amidst it all, He set us an example not to neglect prayer, however busy we may be. We read that Jesus rose up a great while before day, that He might have time for prayer and meditation, for in the daytime the people thronged around Him to be healed of their diseases and infirmities.

Our Saviour, in order to separate Himself from the crowd, entered into a fisherman's vessel, and so exhausted was his

human nature, that He fell asleep. While
 Mark } Jesus was asleep, a great storm
 iv. } of wind arose, which made the sea
 very rough ; so rough that the fishermen,
 who were also our Lord's disciples, were
 afraid, and they woke the Saviour with the
 cry, "Master, carest Thou not that we
 perish ?" and by so doing they showed
 both faith and distrust. They believed
 that Jesus *awake* could save them from
 danger, but their faith was not strong
 enough to make them feel that the fact of
 his presence with them was sufficient to
 keep all danger from them. Our Saviour,
 when He awoke, chided the disciples for this
 want of strong faith in Him ; but quieted
 their fears by immediately making the rough
 wind to cease, and the sea to be smooth.

He then ordered them to go out fur-
 ther into the sea, and let down their nets
 Luke } to catch fish. The disciples did
 v. } as Jesus commanded them, but said
 they thought it would be of little use, for

they had been fishing all night, and had taken nothing ; but Jesus, who could do everything, from the very least to the greatest, so willed that his disciples should take a number of fish ; and so numerous were they, that when the men drew up the nets at the command of their Lord, such a multitude of fish were enclosed that they feared the nets would be broken, and they called to other fishermen who were in boats nearer the shore to come and help them.

When Jesus landed on the opposite shore, which was the country of the Gergesenes, He cast out two devils, or in other words, He restored two madmen to their right mind. He caused the devils to possess a herd of swine, and they immediately rushed into the sea, { Matt. viii. and were drowned.

The people of the country were afraid when they saw the great power of Jesus, and begged Him to depart from among

them. He returned into his own country and his own city, and wrought many more
Matt.
ix. } miracles, again making the dumb to
 speak, and the lame and palsied
 man to walk and carry his bed, instead of
 lying helpless upon it.

QUESTIONS.

Charles. Who is meant by a centurion ?

Mamma. The officer in command of a hundred men.

Henry. Why did our Saviour cause the death of the swine ? By swine you mean pigs, do you not, mamma ?

Mamma. Yes, my love ; and it was forbidden to the Jews by their law to keep swine ; it was probably for that reason Jesus caused their destruction.

George. How could a man carry his bed ?

Mamma. The beds in the East were not like ours, on bedsteads ; but consisted only of a light bed, which the owner rolled up

and carried about with him from place to place; and the only covering for which was the blanket, which they carried about in the same way, and made use of for various purposes; so you can understand now that a man could easily carry his bed.

STORY VI.

THE SENDING OUT OF THE APOSTLES.

"All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."
—ISAIAH lii. 10.

JESUS now sent out twelve of his disciples, or followers, to carry on his work in the world, of healing the sick and preaching the kingdom of heaven; and He named them apostles. The word apostle means one sent, or a messenger. I will tell you all their names; but if you wish to remember them, you had better learn them. Simon Peter and Andrew were brothers; James and John were brothers; Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, another James, Lebbæus or Thaddæus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas

Iscariot. Jesus sent them to preach to the Jews only; the time was not { Matt. x.
 come for the Gentiles to hear the
 gospel. He warned them that they would meet with trials, and imprisonments, and hatred, from those to whom they were to preach; but that they must care for none of these things, believing that God was with them and caring for them, and He would enable them to bear all things for his name's sake; and assured them that nothing could happen to them but what God willed. Jesus told them that not even a sparrow could fall to the ground without God's knowing it; and that He even knew the number of hairs on their heads.

How these words must have comforted and reassured the disciples, when setting out on their dangerous mission. Christ went on with his own preaching { Matt. xi.
 after He had sent out the apostles,
 and Herod the king, hearing of his won-

drous words and works, thought that John
 Matt. } the Baptist, who you will remember
 xiv. } he caused to be beheaded, must
 be risen from the dead ; he did not know
 that the little babe his father had been so
 eager to kill was God's anointed One, the
 Saviour of mankind, preaching God's
 lovingkindness, and showing all who would
 learn the way to heaven.

Great was the multitude that thronged
 around our Saviour to hear his gracious
 words, and so eager were they, that they
 remained all day without going away to
 get food. Jesus had compassion on them,
 Luke } and ordered his disciples to feed
 ix. } them. This command filled them
 John }
 vi. } with amazement, for the multitude
 numbered thousands, and the food the
 disciples had with them was only five
 loaves and a few small fishes ; and they
 wondered how such a small quantity of
 food could possibly supply such a multi-
 tude ; but when they expressed their

doubts to Jesus, He only told them to bid the multitude sit down on the grass ; and they sat down, in number five thousand. Our Saviour then took the five loaves and the fishes, blessed them, and breaking them, gave them into the hands of the disciples, who fed the multitude until they had *all* eaten quite enough to satisfy their hunger ; and not only did this great multitude receive sufficient food from these few loaves and fishes, but there was some remaining. We read in the sacred story that after they had all eaten and were satisfied, the disciples filled twelve baskets with the bits that were left. How astonished the disciples and the multitude must have been at the wonderful power and goodness of Jesus Christ !

QUESTIONS.

Henry. How did Jesus Christ satisfy all that multitude of people with so very little bread ?

Mamma. The Bible tells us the quantity of the bread was miraculously increased, and we read that twelve baskets were filled with the fragments or remaining pieces.

STORY VII.

THE PARABLES.

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”—PROVERBS xxv. 2.

It was by parables that our Saviour taught the great multitude around Him. The seed, which when cast abroad by the sower does not all fall upon the good ground prepared for it, but is scattered, some upon the hard and beaten pathway, where it is soon crushed by men walking over it, and some upon stony ground, where it remains until the birds find it and eat it, was, in our Saviour's story, made to represent three different sorts of hearers of his word; the hard-hearted, upon whom the truths of the gospel have no effect, but who go on their

{ Matt.
xiii.
Mark
iv.

way as if they had not heard; and those whose hearts are so full of the cares and pleasures of this world that though they have now and then a few thoughts about religion, and at times a wish to be better than they are, yet these good wishes and thoughts are so set aside and so seldom allowed to enter that they are soon crushed by the multitude of worldly thoughts and desires with which the heart of such as these is filled; lastly, the seed which fell into the good and prepared ground represented the heart full of the grace of God which gladly listens to the truths of the gospel, and practices them in life, bringing forth very much fruit. Another of our Saviour's parables was likening the bad men of the world to the tares which are sure to spring up with the wheat in a field of grain, but which, when reaping time comes, are not housed with the corn, but put in heaps and burnt as rubbish.

Besides these, Jesus told the people

many other parables by which those who would learnt great truths; but those who did not care to find out what our Saviour meant learnt nothing. When Jesus had sent the multitude away, after they had been fed, He ordered his disciples to get into a ship; but He retired { Matt. xiv. to a mountain and spent the first part of the night in prayer. After that Jesus joined the disciples who were in the ship, by walking upon the sea, walking out into the very midst of a rough and troubled sea.

When the disciples saw Jesus, they cried out with fear and awe at the wonderful sight; but Jesus spoke to them, and reassured them. And when our Saviour's voice was heard, Peter, who you may remember was one of the apostles, desired to go to Jesus, who bade him come to Him upon the water. Peter left the ship and began to walk to Jesus, but when he had gone but a little way he became afraid, and then he began to sink beneath the waves.

He called out to Jesus to save him, and immediately the merciful hand of our Saviour was stretched out, and Peter was safe, receiving a rebuke from his Lord for his want of faith. When both Jesus and Peter had entered into the ship, the rough wind was still, and they sailed across to the land of Gennesaret, where Jesus healed all the sick that were brought to Him.

Our Saviour journeys along the coast
 . Matt. } to the towns of Tyre and Sidon, and
 xv. } while there, He healed the daughter
 Mark } of a Canaanitish woman, who showed
 vii. } great faith in seeking help from Jesus, as
 she was not an Israelite. And continuing
 his journey until He rested on a mountain
 Mark } close to Galilee, our Saviour fed
 viii. } another multitude which had been
 listening to the divine Preacher for three
 days. This time the number of the loaves
 was seven, and a few fish besides. The
 number that were fed was four thousand
 men, besides women and children. The

number of baskets filled with the fragments was seven.

QUESTIONS.

George. Will you tell me again what a parable is, mamma ?

Mamma. Certainly, my boy ; a parable means a story, or little history, intended to teach some truth, and it always tells of something which is similar, or has a likeness to that which is to be learned from it. Have I made my meaning plain to you ?

George. Yes, I understand ; just as you said that the seed which men put in the ground is like the lessons we ought to receive into our hearts to make us good.

Charles. What are tares ?

Mamma. A species of vetch ; there are many varieties, and they are pretty but useless, and indeed I believe they do harm to the corn if allowed to continue in a field, as they cling and spread and prevent the growth of the grain.

Henry. Peter was Simon Peter, I suppose, the brother of Andrew ?

Mamma. Yes, my love.

Charles. How was it that Peter could walk on the water at first, and not afterwards ?

Mamma. As long as he felt and believed that Jesus would enable him to walk on the sea to Him, and had no fear, his faith caused Jesus to give him the power of doing so ; but when he lost his faith, and became afraid of losing the power of keeping upon the water, Jesus took that power away from his disciple, to show him that by faith he could do everything, but without faith he could do nothing, and that faith must be strong.

Henry. Why did the Canaanitish woman show great faith because she was not an Israelite ?

Mamma. Because she was discouraged by the followers of Jesus on that account ; and Jesus himself said that He was only

sent to the Jewish nation; and yet she persevered in her entreaties that Christ would heal her child, thus showing that she was quite sure, notwithstanding the want of encouragement she received, that Jesus could and would do so.

STORY VIII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION—MORE PARABLES.

“Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.”—PSALM xxiv. 10.

THE next event in our Saviour's life on earth was his transfiguration; while

Matt.	}	He was on a mountain with only
xvii.		
Mark		
ix.	}	three of his disciples, and when in

the midst of prayer, a change came over the person of our blessed Lord. His countenance shone, and his raiment was white and glistening; and the three disciples saw Moses and Elias talking with

Luke	}	Jesus. They were speaking with our
ix.		
	}	Saviour of the sufferings and death

He was to undergo shortly at Jerusalem: the disciples were asleep during part of the time, and they awoke to behold this

glorious sight, and to hear the voice of Almighty God speaking from the midst of the glory, and saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear Him:" then a cloud overshadowed the glorious light and after a while Jesus was alone again with his disciples.

There were many among the people who asked our Saviour questions, not from any real desire to learn, but { ^{Luke} _{x.} from curiosity, or what was worse, from a wish to make Him say something which would offend the Jews; it was with this wrong intention that a lawyer asked Jesus, who was his neighbour, in order that he might fulfil the duty of loving his neighbour as himself: Jesus, as an answer, told him the beautiful story of the good Samaritan who, while on a journey, found by the roadside a poor man who had been wounded and stripped of his clothes by thieves; two of his own nation had passed by him without offering him any assist-

ance, and one without even going to look on him : but this good Samaritan delayed his journey to do all he could for him ; he bound up his wounds, put him upon his own mule, took him to an inn, and paid the landlord twopence for taking care of him, when he was obliged to continue his journey.

Our Saviour at the end of the story, asked the lawyer which of these men showed himself neighbour to the poor wounded traveller ; of course the lawyer answered, the Samaritan, and thus he was shown the lesson Jesus Christ wished him and those around Him to learn, and us through them ; namely, that every one is our neighbour to whom we can show any kindness.

Another man, young, and rich in this world's goods, wanted to know how

Matt. } he might win eternal life : our
xix. } Saviour, knowing the hearts of all, knew that this young man thought too

much of his wealth, and the comforts and luxuries it obtained for him; so He told him to prove his sincerity by selling all his property and giving the money to the poor; but the young man could not make up his mind to do this, and he went away from our Saviour sorrowful, because it was necessary for him to do that which was so hard to him.

Many among the multitude who gathered around our Saviour had little children with them, and they were { Mark x. anxious that Jesus should touch them and bless them, and they brought them to Him for the purpose. The disciples objected to the children being brought, thinking that it was giving their Master so much unnecessary trouble; but Jesus would not allow them to prevent the little ones being brought, but took them up in his arms and blessed them, and told those around Him that all must become as little children to be fit to be inheritors of the

kingdom of Heaven. After this our Saviour went away from the people.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. I suppose the meaning of transfiguration is, change of appearance ?

Mamma. Yes, my love.

Charles. How did the three disciples know that it was Moses and Elias who were talking with Jesus Christ ?

Mamma. Probably God revealed to them that it was Moses and Elias; Moses to signify the law, and Elias the prophets, in company with the gospel as represented in the person of Jesus Christ.

Henry. Why did Jesus name a Samaritan in that pretty story ?

Mamma. A Samaritan was of a different nation to the Jew; but it made our Saviour's lesson the more strongly show what our duty to our neighbour includes, because the Samaritans were enemies of the Jews, and had no dealings with them ;

but notwithstanding this, while two of the poor wounded man's own people passed him by, one of the enemies of his nation did everything that he could for him.

Charles. Twopence seems a very little sum ; was that enough, mamma, to pay the man's expenses ?

Mamma. Twopence then, and in that country, was not of the same value as twopence now ; in those days one penny was worth as much as sevenpence three-farthings of our money, and it went a great deal further.

George. I should have liked to have been one of those little children whom Jesus held in his arms and blessed !

Mamma. It must have been a touching and beautiful sight, and must have made the disciples feel how full of love and humility the heart of their Master was.

STORY IX.

CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM—PARABLES.

“Behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”—ZECHARIAH ix. 9.

JESUS now prepared to journey to Jerusalem, and He warned his disciples that He was going there to fulfil the prophecies which foretold of his sufferings and death; but they did not understand their Master. The first place they journeyed to was Jericho; and while on his way thither, He healed a blind man who sat by the wayside begging. The poor man heard the noise of the many people passing by, and he asked what it all meant. He was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. The blind man knew

Matt.
xx.
Mark
x.
Luke
xviii.

that this was He who had cured so many people of their different infirmities and diseases, and he called upon Him with loud and eager cry to have mercy upon him, and restore his sight to him. Then Jesus ordered the blind man to be brought to Him, and He healed him. Jesus then went on his way to the city of Jericho, and through Jericho on towards Jerusalem. When our Lord was arrived very near to that city, He sent two of his disciples forward, with orders to go to a certain place in the village to which they had come near, and to bring from there a young ass, which they would find tied with her mother. If anybody asked the disciples what they were about, our Lord bid them say that they were bringing them because He had need of them ; so they did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and put their garments upon him for Jesus to sit upon. And in this way the Saviour of mankind

{ Matt.
xxi.
Mark
xi.
Luke
xix.

entered Jerusalem, the people laying down their garments and branches of trees on the ground He was to ride over, and crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David! hosanna in the highest!" I will now relate to you some parables told by Jesus Christ to the Pharisees, and rulers, and great ones among the people, who came around Him in Jerusalem to hear what He

Matt. }
xxv. } had to say. The first I shall tell you is called the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were wise, and five were foolish, and who all went forth to welcome a bridegroom on his return home. They all carried lamps to light when they saw the bridegroom coming; but there was this difference between the ten—the five wise ones had taken oil to trim their lamps with, but the five foolish ones had taken no oil. So when the bridegroom came, they could not light their lamps; and while they were going about from one to another, and trying to borrow oil, the bridegroom went

into his house to hold his marriage-feast, and the doors were shut, and the five foolish virgins were not admitted. This parable was intended to teach all who read it, or hear it, that we should always be preparing ourselves for heaven, because it will be too late to do so when the last day has arrived, and the Son of Man comes to judgment. Another parable, or { Luke
rather two little parables, which { xv.
come together, and teach the same lesson, are, first of a woman losing one piece out of ten pieces of money, and who, on finding that she had lost it, swept her house, and searched until she had found it, and then rejoiced more over the piece that had been missing than over the nine pieces she had never lost. Next of a man who lost one out of a hundred sheep, and who, upon finding out his loss, left the ninety-nine sheep to go and seek for the missing one; and finding it, he put it on his shoulders, and carried it back with great joy, thinking

more of it for the time than he did of the ninety-nine sheep that had been always safe. And these two pretty little stories were both told by Jesus Christ to show how God and the angels rejoiced when one who had been a great sinner was brought to love God and amend his life. Another parable, which is a very pretty one, teaches almost the same lesson; it is called the

Luké
xv.
}
prodigal son, and our Saviour's story tells in simple and touching words

of one of two brothers who, after asking his father for the part of the inheritance which was to be his, left his home, and wandered away to a country a long way off, and in a very short time spent all his money, and did not know how to get food or shelter; and in order to obtain them, was obliged to hire himself as a labourer to one of the citizens, who sent him into his fields to mind his swine—or pigs, as we call them. And he was so hungry, that he was ready to eat the husks, or outsides of the nuts,

and grain that the pigs found in the fields. At last, after suffering much from hunger and want, he began to think how wrong and foolish it was of him to go away from his father and his comfortable home ; and he made up his mind to return and ask his father to forgive him for his bad conduct. He felt that his behaviour had been so bad, that he could not expect his father to look upon him as a son any longer, but he would ask him to let him be with him as a servant ; and these are the beautiful words of our Saviour used by him in the parable, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants." And you will remember that the greater part of these words are used in church most Sundays in the opening sentences with which the clergyman begins the prayers.

As soon as this young man had made

up his mind to return to his home, he set out on his way there; and when he came within sight of the house, his father saw him, and came out to meet him, and kissed him, and welcomed him home as one that had been lost and was now found, and had been to him even as one dead and now restored to life again. To show his great joy at his son's return, he had a fat calf killed, and made a feast in his house. The elder son, who had never disobeyed his father, or left his home, was jealous that so much honour should be shown his offending brother, and complained to his father that he had never made a feast for him; but his father answered him that he had partaken of everything and had a share in everything that belonged to him, and therefore he did not require a special feast to be made for him. This beautiful parable of our Saviour's teaches us how ready our heavenly Father is to forgive the repenting sinner, and how He rejoices when



THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.



any one of us turn to Him with entreaties for pardon, and a wish to be received by Him as his child.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. How was it that the disciples did not understand our Saviour when He told them that He was going to be put to death? It seems quite plain to read.

Mamma. I suppose they could not realize that such a great and heavy sorrow was coming upon them, nor could they believe that their Lord and Master, who they thought was to make Himself a king, and who had shown Himself so strong in power and authority, would allow the Jews to put Him to death.

Charles. Why did Jesus Christ choose an ass to ride upon?

Mamma. Our Saviour chose the ass, most likely, as more fitted to his meek and humble bearing than the horse; but the ass in Eastern countries is a very different

animal, and put to much more honourable uses than our animal of the same name. The white ass was ridden upon by kings, and was bred up with great care.

George. What does prodigal mean?

Mamma. It means wasteful and extravagant.

STORY X.

THE BETRAYAL AND DENIAL.

"He is despised and rejected of men. . . . He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; yet He opened not his mouth."—ISAIAH liii. 3, 7.

THE rulers and great men among the Jews were greatly offended at our Saviour, because He reprovèd them for their unbelief, and their great outside show of religion, while their lives were so unholy; and they had often felt the desire of doing Him harm, and had on two occasions attempted it. But Jesus, by his miraculous power, had become unseen by them; and at other times they had feared the people, who were better disposed towards Jesus Christ; but by this time their hatred had become so strong that they determined that in some way or

{ Matt.
xxvi.
Mark
xiv.
Luke
xxii.

other our Saviour should be put to death, and they stirred up the people to desire the death of the Son of God.

The Feast of the Passover was just about to begin, and it was the custom of the Jews to desire the release of some prisoner at the feast, and to deliver the others over to death; and that death, according to the Roman law, was crucifixion. And this was the fate the rulers determined should befall our Saviour. But, first of all, it was necessary that they should make Him their prisoner; and this, sad to relate, they accomplished through one of Christ's own disciples; and not only a disciple, but one of the twelve apostles—one of those who had been with Him from the beginning of his ministry; he whose feet had

John } been washed by his Lord and
xiii. } Master, and who had partaken of the Last Supper with his Saviour, was the one to betray Him into the hands of the wicked Jews. This was Judas Iscariot,

who went to the chief priests and rulers, and asked them what they would give him if he agreed to deliver Jesus into their hands? They promised to give him thirty pieces of silver, and Judas entered into the wicked agreement with them.

Now this sinful man could have had no power to betray our Saviour if our blessed Lord had not willed that it should be so; but He came on earth for the very purpose of suffering death upon the cross that man might live. He was Himself looking forward to all that was about to happen. He had gone up to Jerusalem because the time was come, and He had already warned his disciples of his approaching death, and that it was one of them who would betray Him. So now, when Judas Iscariot, proceeding to carry out his wicked intention, came with a band of soldiers to the { Matt. xxvi. garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was passing the remaining time in agony and prayer, He hindered him not, but allowed

Himself to be taken prisoner. Nor would He permit the disciples to interfere for his deliverance, but healed a man among the soldiers whose ear was cut off by Peter with his sword in his Master's defence. And thus it came to pass that the holy Son of God was bound as a malefactor, and delivered into the hands of the chief priests to do with Him according to their desires.

Jesus was taken before Pontius Pilate, who was the Roman Governor of Judæa, and who, after hearing all that was said against Him, could find no fault in Him, and told the people so, and proposed to release Jesus to them; but they chose instead a prisoner named Barabbas, who was both a thief and a murderer, and desired that Christ should be crucified; so Pilate delivered Him up to be crucified.

But I must now go back a little to tell you of two things which happened before our Saviour was given up by Pilate to be crucified: one is about the apostle, Simon

Peter, and the other relates to the wretched betrayer, Judas Iscariot. Peter had declared to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, a little while before the coming of the soldiers, that he would never forsake his Master, but that, though all the rest should be afraid to acknowledge Him, he would remain faithful; and our Saviour had warned his disciple that he was too bold and self-confident, and the warning was, as we shall see, but too well-founded. After Jesus Christ was betrayed, and taken by the soldiers to be delivered up to the high-priest, the disciples, from fear and trouble of mind, all fled except two, and these two followed afar off into the judgment-hall to see what would happen. One of these two was Simon Peter; he did not keep close to his Master to show himself a disciple, but he went and sat down at the other end among the servants of the high-priest, and by the fire, because it was cold. Even

{ Luke
xxii.{ Mark
xiv.{ Matt.
xxvi.

this was something like denial of Jesus
 Luke } Christ; but by and by one and
 xiii. } another observed him, and recog-
 nized him as one that had been with Jesus,
 and accused him of being a follower of
 Jesus. And what did Peter say? Did he
 keep his promise that he would be faithful
 when all beside were false? No, he de-
 nied his Saviour three times to three
 different people, and the last time he
 swore that he did not know Jesus; and
 then a cock crew, and that sound brought
 the words of his Saviour to Peter's re-
 membrance, for our blessed Lord had said
 that Peter's denial should take place before
 the cock crew. And Peter raised his eyes,
 and found that Jesus was looking at him;
 and the heart of the disciple was so filled
 with shame and sorrow that he could not
 bear that look, and he went out of the
 way, and wept bitter tears of grief and
 repentance.

And now I will tell you the other

event, concerning Judas Iscariot. He seems not to have thought of the consequences of his wicked act, when he agreed with the chief priests and rulers to betray our Saviour; for when he found that his Lord and Master was bound { Matt. xvii. and taken away to the Roman governor to be put to death, he repented, and wanted to undo the evil he had done; for he took back the money to the priests and rulers, and told them he had done wrong in betraying Jesus Christ. But they did not care for the repentance of Judas; they had gained their end, and that was all they cared for. Then Judas went out, but not to weep and pray for forgiveness; he went and hanged himself, and the money which he had thrown down in the temple was spent in buying a field to bury strangers in, and it was called the field of blood.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. You said that the rulers had

twice tried to harm Jesus Christ; what did they do, and how did Jesus hide himself from them?

Mamma. The first time was when our Saviour was in the Temple showing the Jews that He knew what was in their hearts, and that they wanted to destroy Him because they would not believe that He was the Son of God. Jesus was trying to make them see that He must be God as well as man—that He and his Father were one; but they were only the more offended, and at last they took up stones to cast at Jesus, but He passed through the midst of them unseen, and left the Temple. Jesus was in the Temple on the other occasion walking in Solomon's Porch on one of the feast days, and the Jews came and asked Him to tell them plainly if He were the Christ. Jesus answered that the works which He did showed them plainly enough that He was, if they chose to believe; but that they were not his sheep, and therefore

they did not hear his voice. Then they again took up stones to cast at Jesus, but He escaped out of their hands, and went away beyond the river Jordan, which you remember, I hope, was the river wherein our Saviour was baptized by John. Jesus, by the divine power which was in Him, could make Himself invisible at his pleasure.

Charles. What had the Romans to do with the Jews?

Mamma. The Jewish nation was under the Roman government, because it had been conquered by the Romans. When you are a little older, you will read about it in history. There were Roman soldiers and a Roman governor in Jerusalem, and the governor decided what was to be done with all prisoners and persons brought before him?

George. What is a malefactor?

Mamma. One who has done something very wrong or committed crime.

Henry. I cannot think how the disciples could leave Jesus Christ when He was in the hands of those wicked men. Do you think we should have done so ?

Mamma. Yes, I fear we should have been no better than the disciples ; we act just the same now in spirit, when we are ashamed of or neglect any religious duty because of men.

Charles. Why was the field bought with the money Judas threw down called the field of blood ?

Mamma. Because the money had been given as the price of the life of Jesus Christ, whose blood was about to be shed.

STORY XI.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

"He was taken from prison and from judgment; . . . for the transgression of my people was He stricken."—ISAIAH liii. 8.

WE left Jesus Christ in the hands of Pontius Pilate, who was to determine what should be done to Him. Pilate could not but feel that Jesus was innocent of all that was laid against Him, and { Matt. xxvii. he tried to soften the hatred of the Jews; but they would not hear anything in his behalf, and they told Pilate that if he tried to save Jesus he was not Cæsar's friend, meaning his master, the Roman Emperor; this saying frightened Pilate, and he tried no more to save Jesus Christ, and yet he felt afraid to deliver up the innocent one to death; so he washed his hands before

the Jews, and told them that on *them* must be the blood of Christ, meaning that they must bear the awful consequences of killing the Holy One of God; and the wretched Jews agreed with one voice that Christ's blood should be upon them and their children; and a most fearful punishment did they indeed bring upon themselves, as you will find another day from history. So then Pilate scourged Jesus

Mark } Christ, and gave Him into the
xv. } hands of his soldiers to be crucified.

The soldiers took our Saviour into the common hall of the governor's palace, and after taking his own clothes off Him, they put a purple robe on Him, and put a reed in his right hand, and plaited a crown of
Matt. } thorns and put it on his head; and
xxvii. } all this they did in cruel mockery of his being a king; they insulted the Son of God by spitting upon Him, and mocked Him by bowing the knee and saying, Hail, King of the Jews. After this the soldiers took

the robe off Him, and put his own clothes on Him again, and led Him out to crucify Him; making Him bear the weight of the cross He was to be nailed upon for some distance, until He was nigh fainting under the load, and then they took it off our Saviour's back and laid it upon that of a countryman of Cyrene, named Simon, who happened to be passing by, and obliged him to bear it after Jesus; and so they came to the place called Calvary, where He was to be crucified, but not alone; there were two thieves crucified with Him, one on each side. One of these thieves reviled our Saviour, and desired Him, if He were indeed Christ, to save Himself and them; but the other thief acknowledged { Luke
Jesus, though nailed upon the cross, xxiii.
to be the Son of God, and prayed that He would remember and pardon him when He came into his kingdom; and for this repentance and great faith Christ said to him the welcome words, "To-day shalt

- thou be with me in paradise." When these wicked men had nailed our Saviour to the cross, they sat down to watch, after putting an inscription over the cross, on which was written in Hebrew and Greek ^{John} _{xix.} } and Latin, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*. While sitting there they employed themselves in sharing the garments of our Saviour amongst them, and for one of them they cast lots whose it should be, because it was without seam, woven from the top throughout, and therefore the soldiers thought it was a pity to tear it; this garment was a proof of our Saviour's humility and poverty, for it was worn by the poorest amongst the Jews. While Jesus was hanging on the cross, He prayed God the Father to forgive those who were reviling and persecuting Him. He loved them even then, and was He not laying down his life for them! Jesus also commended his mother, who was weeping at the foot of the cross, to the care of



JOHN TAKES THE MOTHER OF JESUS TO HIS OWN HOME.



his best beloved disciple, St. John, who took her to his own home. After this, Jesus cried out, "I thirst!" This thirst was caused by the great agony of hanging upon the cross, the nails tearing the tender and living flesh of his hands and feet; the soldiers offered our Saviour vinegar and myrrh to drink, which was given to dull the sense of pain, but after tasting it He refused to drink the bitter but deadening mixture; and soon another loud cry was heard from our Saviour's lips, and the words were, "It is finished!" and then He was no longer a living man.

When this solemn and awful cry sounded over the place, a great darkness fell over all things, and strange sounds were heard, and many graves opened, and the dead bodies that were in them arose and walked about, and appeared to many. The darkness lasted for three hours, and the solemn awfulness of the time convinced some amongst those unbelieving people that He

whom they had crucified was truly the Son of God. The Jews did not wish the bodies to remain upon the crosses the next day, because it was their Sabbath, being Saturday—the day of our Lord's crucifixion, you know, we call Good Friday,—so they begged that they might be taken down; then came the soldiers to break the legs of the crucified ones lest they might not be dead; the legs of the thieves they broke, but when the soldiers came to Jesus they found that He was dead, so they did not break his legs, but one of the soldiers pierced our Saviour's side with his spear, and from the wound flowed blood and water, which represented the two sacraments—Baptism and the Supper of our Lord.

There was a man named Joseph who had believed on Jesus Christ, but had kept his belief secret, because he was afraid of the Jews, who now came forward and begged to have the body of our Saviour given up to him; and Pilate, after making sure that

Jesus was dead, gave him leave to take the body away. There was also another, who had been so afraid of the Jews that he had gone to Jesus by night to be taught; this was Nicodemus. He now brought sweet spices to anoint the body of his Saviour; so these two, with the assistance of the women who had loved and clung to Jesus, clothed and embalmed the body, and laid it in the tomb prepared for it by Joseph. It was hewn out of the rock, and was quite new; and there they left it, that they might keep the Sabbath.

QUESTIONS.

George. What is the meaning of scourged?

Mamma. Beaten with a scourge, which was an instrument consisting of several ends of cord, knotted, and fastened into a handle. You may see the representation of a scourge in many pictures of the crucifixion.

Charles. Why was the inscription written in so many languages?

Mamma. That it might be read by every one—the Jews who spoke Hebrew, and the Romans who spoke Latin, and strangers from Greece.

George. What did Jesus mean when He cried out, “It is finished”?

Mamma. Jesus meant that the purpose for which He came on earth, lived a life of poverty, shame, and suffering, and now underwent death upon the cross, was fulfilled. He had obtained eternal life for man, and restored him to God’s favour. His work was done; He might now return to the glory which He had left for man’s sake.

Henry. Why did the Jews rub spices on the body of Jesus?

Mamma. To preserve it. It was the custom of all Eastern people to embalm the bodies of the dead, or rub them over with certain spices and ointments; and

the body thus prepared, and wrapped in linen, was called a mummy. There is a place in London called the British Museum at which there are some very perfect ones to be seen. You know what spices are, do you not? Nutmeg, cloves, and the long sticks called cinnamon, are spices.

STORY XII.

THE RESURRECTION.

“Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, neither shalt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.”—PSALM xvi. 11 (Prayerbook Version).

THE chief Priests knew that Jesus had
Matt. } said that He should rise again
xxvii. } on the third day from his death,
so they begged Pilate that means might
be taken to make the tomb in which
Jesus was laid quite secure, lest any
one should steal the body away, and then
say that He was risen. So Pilate, in
accordance with their desire, had the Roman
seal placed upon the stone which closed the
entrance to the tomb, and sent soldiers to
watch by it until the time should be passed
by. But no Roman authority, no soldiers’

power or arms, could keep Jesus in the tomb. At the appointed time the stone was removed by heavenly power, and the Son of Man arose a conqueror from death and the grave. An angel remained to comfort the hearts of those who should come to seek their Master. Two women, both named Mary, were the first to come. Long before sunrise they hastened to finish the work of anointing the body, which they had been obliged to leave. They were wondering as they walked along who they should get to roll away the stone for them, which they knew would be too heavy for them to move themselves. But, behold! when they came to the tomb, not only was the stone already moved, but the brightness of the glorious messenger filled their hearts with fear and awe. The angel bade them not be afraid nor sorrowful. He told them that they were wrong to seek Jesus among the dead, when He Himself had told them that He should rise again

{ Mark
xvi.

the third day. Then the two women went away and told Peter and John, two of the disciples, that Jesus was risen from the dead, and that if they came to the place they would find that the tomb was empty. So both the disciples ran to see if the wonderful news were true. John was the first to reach the tomb ; but he did not enter it, he

John } only looked in. When Peter came up,
 xx } he went into the tomb, and saw the grave-clothes placed in an orderly manner, but no Saviour there ; and then they believed that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead. Afterwards they left the garden ; but Mary Magdalene—one of the women who had first discovered that Jesus was gone, and who had returned after making the news known to the disciples, and who loved our Saviour very much, for He had forgiven her much sin—could not leave the place, she missed her Lord so much, and she wandered about the garden, weeping for sorrow. Presently she saw some one

whom she supposed to be the gardener, and who asked her why she was weeping. Mary answered him, Because she knew not where her Lord was taken to. Then the voice was heard again saying, "Mary." Then she knew it was Jesus speaking to her, and she cried, "Master!" and would have clung to his feet in her joy. But Jesus suffered her not to touch Him, but told her to go to the disciples and tell them that his ascension into heaven would soon take place. So Mary did as Jesus commanded her.

In the evening of that same day, when the disciples were gathered together for prayer, in a room with closed doors, { ^{John} ~~xx~~ Jesus appeared suddenly in the midst of them, and showed them the wounds in his hands and side, to assure them that it was in truth Himself. Then they rejoiced, because they saw their Lord and Master once more. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, was not with

the others at the time of this appearance of our Saviour to them, and when they told him of what had happened, he could not believe; and he said that he must himself see the marks of the nails in his Saviour's hands, and feel the wound in his side before he could believe that He had really appeared to them. At the end of another week, when the disciples were again assembled with closed doors, and Thomas with them, Jesus appeared a second time in the midst of them, and told Thomas to take the proof he required, and not to be unbelieving.

Once more did Jesus appear to the disciples, but at a time when they were differently employed. Simon Peter had gone with some others of the disciples to fish in the Lake of Tiberias; they were

John	}	fishing all night, and caught nothing.
xxi.		When the morning came, they saw

some one standing on the shore, who said to them, "Children, have you any meat?"

This was Jesus ; but the disciples did not recognize Him. However, they answered that they had no meat ; they were then bid to cast their nets on the right side of the ship, with a promise that they should find. They cast the net, and it became so full of fish that they could not draw it out of the water.

Now the disciples knew that the person standing on the shore must be Jesus, and Peter immediately swam to shore, and the others came in the ship ; and then they drew out the net, and found it contained an hundred and fifty and three fish, and though the number was so great, the net was not broken. The disciples found a fire lighted, and fish being dressed upon it, and bread, and Jesus invited them to come and dine ; and He brake bread and gave to them, and fish likewise. After they had dined, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. This was evidently referring to the apostle's thrice-repeated

denial of his Saviour, and it recalled that denial to Peter's remembrance, and he answered in grief and sorrow that Jesus knew that he loved Him. Jesus told him to feed his sheep ; and then He foretold to him that he would be called upon to suffer a cruel death for his sake.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. I do not quite know what sealing the stone means ?

Mamma. Setting the Emperor's seal upon it, which was used on all occasions when his consent and authority were needed to make any Act, or anything lawful and secure ; if you remember, it was mentioned in the Old Testament story of Daniel that the mouth of the lions' den was sealed with the seal of King Darius. Perhaps you would like to know that the watch consisted of sixty soldiers.

Charles. Why were the disciples always

so careful to shut the doors when they met for prayer ?

Mamma. Because if the unbelieving Jews found them out, and told the Chief Priests and rulers, they were persecuted, and forbidden to assemble any more ; and they were many times put in prison for assembling to worship God ; therefore they were obliged to carry on their meetings as secretly as possible, for Christ had told them not to *seek* persecution.

George. What did Jesus mean by telling Peter to feed his sheep ?

Mamma. By his sheep Jesus meant all men who would hear the gospel, believe, repent, and follow Christ the good Shepherd ; and by those words He told Peter that he was to make known the gospel to mankind, and feed them with its living truths.

Henry. What death did Peter suffer ?

Mamma. He was crucified ; but not

thinking himself worthy to suffer exactly the same punishment as his Saviour had done, at his own request he was crucified with his head downwards.

THE
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES:



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.



STORY I.

THE ASCENSION, CHOICE OF APOSTLES, ETC.

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive ;
thou hast received gifts for men."—PSALM lxxviii. 18.

I HAVE now only one more event to relate to you concerning Jesus Christ, and that is, his ascension into heaven, to sit at the right hand of God. The apostles went with their Lord and Master up to Mount Olivet, and after He had { Acts
i.
commanded them to remain in Jerusalem

until they had received the Comforter, whom He had promised to send to them to supply his place, a cloud received Him out of their sight, and they knew that they should see Him no more. But while they gazed up after the beloved Master they felt they had now lost, two angels appeared to them, who bid them remember that Jesus Christ would one day come again in glory to judge the world, and they must prepare mankind for that second coming. So then they descended from the mount, and waited patiently in Jerusalem. The first act was to choose an apostle to make up the twelve in the place of Judas Iscariot. This matter was decided in an upper room, by drawing lots between two who were chosen from among a great number who had been disciples from the beginning of John's preaching. These two were Joseph, or Barsabas, surnamed Justus, and Matthias. The lot fell upon Matthias; so he became an apostle.

Now arrived the day when the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, was to be given to the apostles. It came upon them suddenly, when they were all assembled together on the first day of the week. They heard a noise like a rushing wind, and something in appearance like a tongue of fire was seen to rest upon each of them. The first effect this descent had upon the apostles was to enable them to speak in many languages, so that the Jews from the different countries who were then dwelling in Jerusalem were filled with astonishment at hearing them, and could not tell what it meant. Some thought the apostles were drunk ; but Peter reasoned with them that this could not be the case, as it was much too early in the day, being the hour of morning prayer, before which they never took any food ; and he went on to show them from the prophets that this descent of the Holy Ghost had been foretold long before,

{ Acts
ii.

Then Peter preached Jesus Christ to them, who though he had been crucified, was now risen from the dead and gone up into heaven, and that all had happened according as the prophets had prophesied should happen. The hearts of many of those who listened to Peter were softened, and they desired to know what they must do to be saved.

Peter told them to repent and be baptized, and that they should then receive the grace of the Holy Ghost ; and it came to pass that three thousand souls were added to the believers. The apostles had received another gift through the Holy Ghost, and that was the power of healing the sick, and now this power was used for

Acts } the good of a lame man whom Peter
iii. } and John found sitting at one of
the gates of the Temple, called Beautiful,
when they went up to evening prayer ; the
man was begging, and he asked the apostles
to give him something. Peter told him

to look on them, and when the man obeyed, expecting something, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee ; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," and the lame man leaping up stood firm and walked, and entered the Temple with the apostles to praise God for the mercy shown to him ; and when the Jews saw the lame man who had so long been accustomed to sit begging at the gate, walking like themselves, they wondered greatly. Peter upon this again took occasion to preach Jesus Christ to them, and to show them that it was only by his power working in them that they had healed the lame man, and to exhort them to repentance ; but when the chief priests and rulers found that the apostles were teaching the people, { Acts iv. they laid hands on them and put them in prison, but not before they had been the means of increasing the number of believers by five thousand.

The next day Peter and John were taken before the high priest and the rulers, and questioned about the miracle they had performed. Peter declared boldly before them all, that it was performed through the power of the Christ whom they had rejected and despised, and without whom they could not hope for salvation. However, Peter's address to these men did not soften their hearts; they could not deny the miracle, but they determined to prevent the apostles preaching in the name of Jesus Christ; and accordingly they called them and forbade them to teach any more. But Peter and John answered that they must obey God, who had commanded them to tell to others the good and wonderful things which they had been taught. So the priests and rulers threatened them, but let them go at liberty without punishing them, for they were afraid to do so, because of exciting the anger of the people, who acknowledged the

hand of God in the healing of the lame man. Peter and John joined the rest of the apostles, and they all prayed to God that they might have grace to speak the Word boldly, and heal all who came to them, and not care for persecutions ; and the answer to this prayer was an increased gift of God's Holy Spirit enabling them to preach with great power and boldness.

QUESTIONS.

Henry. I do not see why the Jews should have thought the apostles were drunk. How would that have helped them to know different languages ?

Mamma. I imagine it was more from the desire of finding out something to say against the apostles, than that they really thought so ; a few verses before it speaks of them as devout Jews, so they must have known that it was the power of God

200 THE BIBLE OPENED FOR CHILDREN.

working in the apostles which enabled them to do such an extraordinary thing as speak every language in a moment without any former knowledge or instruction.

STORY II.

THE PUNISHMENT OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA, ETC.

“That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a free-will offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord thy God.”—DEUTERONOMY xxiii. 23.

ALL those who believed and formed a community of Christians shared their possessions in common one with another, and many who had land sold it that they might give the money to the apostles, to be divided amongst them all: but one man named Ananias behaved very { Acts
v.
deceitfully, for he sold land, but kept back part of what he was paid for it, and wished the apostles to believe he had brought it all to them; but Peter, through

the power of God's Holy Spirit, knew the deceitful part which Ananias had acted, and asked him why he had so offended God; that he was not obliged to part with his land—he might have kept it without doing wrong to any one; but when he did sell it, why did he deceive with regard to it; it was unto God that he had lied, and God would visit the sin with immediate punishment.

Upon these words Ananias fell down dead at Peter's feet, and the body was carried out and buried; but the awful sin and its punishment were repeated almost directly, for Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, came in, and on being questioned by Peter as to the price the land was sold for, she told the same untruth as her husband had done; then Peter reproved her for having agreed with Ananias to sin so greatly against God, and he told her, as her husband had been struck dead so would she; and behold Sapphira fell down dead,

and the young men who had buried Ananias came in and carried out her body to bury it also.

The people flocked to the apostles to hear them, and to be healed by them. So anxious were they that they laid their sick friends and relations on beds in the street, that the shadow of Peter and the rest might fall upon them. It was not only the people of Jerusalem who did this, but many out of all the cities and villages round about; and every sick person who came, or was brought by others, was healed. These wonderful works raised the anger of the High Priest, and the apostles were cast into prison again.

But God's power freed them the same night, for it was not his will that the preaching of the gospel should be hindered. So He sent an angel, who opened the prison doors, set them free, and bid them go on with their preaching. And this command the apostles obeyed, though

it caused them to be seized, and beaten and dishonoured before men. The Christian community or body of believers increased so very rapidly, and became so numerous, that the apostles found it necessary to appoint men, whom they named deacons, to take care of the poor; and one of these deacons was called Stephen, a very good and earnest-minded Christian, who, after he had received power through the gift of the Holy Ghost, worked a great many miracles, and preached Jesus Christ to the people with great power and wisdom, so that those of the different sects who disputed with him could not resist the power of his words. However, the enemies of this good man Stephen set false witnesses to speak against him, and they accused him before the High Priest of breaking the law. Stephen's answer to his accusers was a history of God's dealings with the Jews from the time of Abraham to their denial and cruci-

Acts
vi.

}

Acts
vii.

}



THE STONING OF STEPHEN.

fixion of Jesus Christ. And when he accused them of being the betrayers and murderers of Jesus, whom he called the Just One, they were so angry with Stephen that they ran upon him, and stoned him; and he suffered this cruel death patiently and meekly, and prayed God with his dying voice that the sin of his death might not be remembered against the Jews.

The men who stoned Stephen took off their clothes, and they laid them down for safety at the feet of a young man named Saul, who, though not actually engaged in stoning him, was willing that he should be thus persecuted. But a great change was to take place in the feelings of { Acts viii. this young man, and he was to become one of God's chosen apostles. And I will tell you how it all came to pass. As Saul was on his way to a city called Damas- { Acts ix. cus—where he was going at his own desire to find out the Christians, in

order to deliver them up to the High Priest for imprisonment and persecution,—and as he came near to the end of his journey, suddenly a very bright light shone all round him. So dazzling, and sudden, and fearful, was the light, that Saul fell to the ground from fear, and then he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”

Saul answered, “Who art thou, Lord?” and the voice answered again, “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” -

Then Saul answered, trembling and astonished, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Jesus answered, “Arise and go into the city of Damascus, and you shall know what I would have you do.”

And behold, when Saul rose up again he found that he was blind; so those that were with him led him by the hand into Damascus, and there he remained for three days quite blind, and without

either eating or drinking. During the night after that third day a devout and holy man who lived in Damascus, named Ananias, saw a vision, and in the vision he heard the Lord Jesus calling to him, and he said, "Behold I am here, Lord." Then the Lord bade Ananias arise and go into one of the streets of the city which was called Straight, and inquire for a person named Saul, who was lodging in the house of a man named Judas. This man Saul, Jesus told Ananias, was engaged in prayer, and had also seen a vision; and in his vision he had seen Ananias come in and put his hand on him that he might receive his sight.

Ananias felt afraid to go to Saul, because he knew well what a persecutor of the Christians he was, and that he had come to Damascus on purpose to find out all who were of that persuasion in the city. But the Lord assured Ananias that He had chosen Saul to preach to the Gentiles,

and to suffer many things for his name's sake.

Then Ananias went to the house where Saul was, and put his hands on him, calling him brother, and telling him that Jesus who had appeared to him on his journey had sent him to restore his eyesight to him. Then immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he could see, and he arose and was at once baptized, and he remained some days with the disciples at Damascus, preaching Jesus Christ in the synagogues. The people who heard him were astonished, for they said, "Is not this the man who was persecuting all the Christians in Jerusalem? and now he is preaching in the name of Jesus!" The Jews in Damascus tried to take Saul to put him to death, so when his friends became aware of this they let him down by night from the wall of the city in a basket, and he returned safely to Jerusalem. But when he wished to join himself to the disciples

in that city, they were all afraid of him, knowing what a persecutor he had been, except one man, named Barnabas, who took Saul, and told the apostles of all that had happened to him since he had left Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS.

George. What does community mean ?

Mamma. A gathering, an assembly, or number of persons who form one body. For instance, a club is a community.

Charles. Mamma, have I not heard you tell a story of some woman being struck dead like Sapphira, for telling a lie ?

Mamma. Yes indeed ; a woman who went to the Devizes market to sell potatoes, I believe, told an untruth about them, and wished that God might strike her dead if it was not as she said ; and she fell down dead in the market-place, and a cross is put up

on the spot with the awful history engraved upon it.

Henry. What do you mean by different sects disputing with Stephen ?

Mamma. There are always some people who will believe the Bible in their own way, and who will not obey the voice of the Church. Some take one view of a point of doctrine or belief, and some another ; and as they all find followers, so many sects spring up, or bodies of people who differ from the teaching of the Church, and appoint teachers for themselves.

George. Stephen was like our Saviour when He prayed for his murderers, was he not ?

Mamma. Yes, my love ; he was indeed a true follower of Jesus Christ on earth, and now he is a glorious saint, and is with his Saviour for ever and ever.

Charles. Was it the light from heaven that made Saul blind ?

Mamma. Yes, doubtless ; it was a very intense and dazzling light, such as no man could look upon, and it was sent to stop Saul on his errand of wickedness.

STORY III.

PETER'S DOINGS AND IMPRISONMENTS.

"In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."—PSALM lvi. 11.

I WILL now tell you a little more about the apostle Peter. As he was on one of his Acts
ix. } journeys about different parts of the country, he came to a city called Lydda, to visit the Christians who dwelt there, and among them he found a man named Æneas, who was so afflicted with palsy, that he had kept his bed eight years. Peter said to him, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed." And when Peter had said these words, the man arose immediately, and all the people of Lydda who saw Peter heal the sick man became believers. Peter was

then sent for to another town, near Lydda, called Joppa, for the disciples of that place were in great distress, because a very good woman had died ; her real name was Tabitha, but she was generally called Dorcas, which name signifies good works ; and so charitable and kind was she to the poor, that everybody lamented her death ; and they trusted that Peter would be able, by the power of the Spirit of God, to raise her up from the dead. So Peter went to Joppa as he was desired, and entering into the upper chamber where the dead body of Dorcas was laid, he put out all the widows who were weeping in the room, and who showed Peter the clothes which she had made for them.

When the apostle was left alone with the dead body, he kneeled down and prayed ; then turning towards the body, he said, " Tabitha, arise !" and lo ! Tabitha opened her eyes, and, seeing Peter, sat up ; and when he gave her his hand she arose from

the bed; and then he called the disciples and widows to come back into the room; and when this great miracle was known in Joppa, many became believers.

Peter remained in Joppa for some days, lodging in the house of a man whose name was Simon, and who was a tanner. It was not long, however, before Peter was sent for again; and this time it was to go into a country called Cæsarea, and to a man who was not a Jew, but a Gentile—one of those people with whom the Jews had no dealings. And I will tell you how it came to pass that this man sent for Peter. Cor-
 Acts }
 x. } nelius was his name, and he was a
 soldier, and a man who feared God, and was very good to the poor. During one of the hours of prayer, Cornelius saw a vision. One of God's holy angels came to him, and told him that his prayers and good works had been accepted by God, and that he was to send to Joppa for Peter, who would tell him what he ought

to do. So, when the vision was ended, Cornelius called two of his servants, and one of the soldiers that waited upon him, and telling them what they were to do, sent them to Joppa.

The next day, when they were nearly at their journey's end, Peter was engaged in morning prayer upon the house-top. After praying for some time, he became very hungry; but while food was being prepared for him, he fell into a trance, and in the trance heaven appeared to open, and something like a great sheet descended, tied at the four corners, and containing all manner of live things, beasts, creeping things, and birds; and a voice said to Peter, "Rise, kill, and eat." Peter answered, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." Then the voice spake again, and said, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Three times was the sheet let up and down, and three times

did Peter hear the voice saying the same words to him, then it disappeared. While Peter was wondering what this vision could mean, the men arrived at the house, who had been sent by Cornelius, and something within Peter told him to attend to the message which the men brought, and to go with them. So the next day Peter set off for Cæsarea, and when he came there he found Cornelius and all his friends awaiting his arrival. When Cornelius saw Peter, he fell down and did homage to him; but Peter raised him up, desiring him not to kneel to him, for he was a man like himself.

When Peter was come into the house, Cornelius told him of the vision he had had; then the apostle understood that God intended by the vision He had shown him, that it was His wish he should preach to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; and he began immediately to preach Jesus Christ to Cornelius and his friends; and

while Peter was speaking to them they received the Holy Ghost, and they were baptized. The Herod who was King of the Jews at this time persecuted the Christians ; and he killed James, { Acts xii. one of the apostles, and because he found this cruel act pleased the unbelieving Jews, he took Peter, and put him in prison, and put sixteen soldiers to guard him, and he slept chained between two soldiers. The night before Herod intended to put Peter to death, one of the holy angels suddenly appeared to Peter, and a glorious light shone in that dark and dreary dungeon. The angel touched Peter, raising him up, and bidding him put on his garment, and follow him. So Peter arose, and the chains fell off his hands, and he put on his sandals and his garment, and followed the angel.

But Peter thought that this was a vision, and not that he was really leaving the prison; the strong iron gate of the prison opened of its own accord to Peter and the angel,

and after God's messenger had led him through one street, he left him.

Then Peter found that he really had been delivered from prison, and out of Herod's power, by the angel of God. When he had recollected himself sufficiently he went to the house of Mark, a brother apostle, and knocked at the door; the young girl who answered the knock knew Peter's voice, and instead of opening the door she was so delighted that she ran away to tell that he was there. Peter's friends could not believe her, and when she assured them again that it was Peter's voice, they said it must be his spirit, no doubt making sure that he had been put to death by Herod. All this time Peter was knocking at the door, and at last his friends opened it and found he was really there. Peter only stopped to tell them how it came to pass that he was out of prison; and then he went away to another place. When the next day came there was great commotion among the

soldiers who had been put to guard Peter, and Herod the king was so angry that he ordered the keepers of the prison to be put to death.

QUESTIONS.

Charles. Why did Peter tell Æneas to make his bed ?

Mamma. Most likely to show the people how completely he was cured ; making his bed you know only consisted in rolling up his mattress and carrying it away.

George. What is a tanner ?

Mamma. One who prepares skins to make into leather, by steeping them in a liquor prepared from oak bark. Some day I will take you to a tan-yard where the skins are all steeped and dried.

Henry. What is a trance, mamma ? and why did Peter answer that he had never eaten anything unclean when he was told to eat of the animals in the sheet ?

Mamma. A trance is a sleep during

which the person is quite conscious of what happens, but cannot speak or move. According to the Jewish law certain animals were unclean, or not fit for food, and it was forbidden to the Jews to eat of them ; and as these animals were among those which appeared before Peter, he refused to eat. These animals represented to him the Gentiles, whom the Jews looked upon as unclean.

Charles. What are sandals ?

Mamma. The covering which was worn on the feet in those days, and which consisted of a sole or bottom part fastened to the foot by leather straps, which crossed each other over the foot, and a little way above the ankle.

STORY IV.

PAUL'S TRAVELS AND PERSECUTIONS.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."—ISAIAH lii. 7.

SAUL, or as he is generally called, Paul, travelled about with Barnabas preaching in every place the Word of God. At Salamis they were opposed by a { Acts
xiii.
wicked sorcerer, by name Elymas, who tried to prevent one of the great men of the island they were then in from hearkening to the words of the apostles; so Paul, by the power of God, smote Elymas with blindness, and he went about trying to find some one to lead him; and this miraculous punishment caused the great man to believe. When the apostles left Salamis they went from one place

to another, until they came to Lystra, where

Acts } they found a poor cripple, a man
xiv. } who had been lame from his birth,
and had never been able to walk; this
poor cripple came to hear Paul preach,
and the apostle seeing that the man be-
lieved in God, said to him, "Stand upright
on thy feet," and immediately the lame man
leaped and walked. The people of Lystra
were so astonished at this great miracle
that they, being poor, ignorant heathens,
thought their false gods, in whom they
believed, were come among them; and
they would have offered sacrifice to the
apostles, as they were accustomed to do
to their gods, but Paul prevented them,
telling them they were men like them-
selves. But there were some wicked
and unbelieving Jews who came to Lystra
from Antioch, who persuaded these ignorant
people to stone Paul instead of worshipping
him; and so severely did they stone him
that he was left as one dead; but after a

while as his disciples were standing over him he rose up, and the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.

After a while the Holy Spirit, speaking within Paul, told him to go into Macedonia. When he was come { Acts xvi.
into that country he went on the Sabbath day to preach to some women who were by the water side, and one of the women, named Lydia, who was a seller of the beautiful purple dye with which the cloaks and garments of the rich and great were dyed, became a believer, and was baptized; and she begged Paul and another apostle named Silas, who was with him, to lodge with her, and they did so.

But it was not long before Paul again suffered persecution, and this time he, with Silas, was cast into prison, and their feet were put in the stocks; but though in prison and in pain from the heavy and pinching irons, Paul and Silas could still praise God, and in the middle of the night

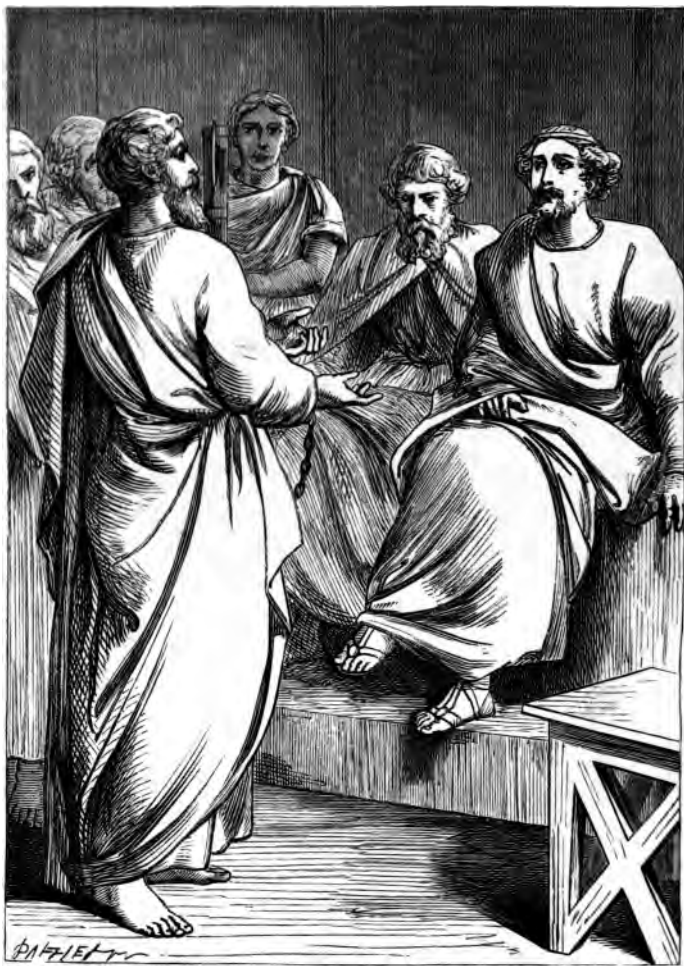
the other prisoners heard these two holy men singing hymns and praying. In the midst of this, behold a fearful sound was heard by them all, and there was a great earthquake which shook the prison, so that the doors burst open and the prisoners' cords and iron fetters were all loosed. The keeper of the prison awoke in fright, and when he found the doors were open he was just on the point of killing himself with his own sword, making sure that the prisoners had all escaped ; but Paul cried out aloud, and told the keeper to do himself no harm, for they were all there. Then the keeper called for a light and went in and fell down before Paul and Silas, asking what he must do to be saved ! They answered him, Believe on Jesus Christ, and you and your house shall be saved. Then he and all in his house were immediately baptized. The keeper did all he could to relieve the pain which Paul and Silas suffered ; he washed their wounds and bruises, and gave

them food to revive them, and they went from the prison to the house of Lydia.

Paul never remained very long in one place, being generally driven out by persecution of some kind or other; but in every place that he was in, however short the time, he never failed to preach the word of God to the people. Sometimes he would preach during half the night, if it was his last night; and when he was doing so at a place called Troas, a young man, { Acts
 who sat in the window in the upper { ^{ix.}
 chamber where the people were assembled, went fast asleep, and fell down from that height nearly to the bottom of the house, and those who picked him up found that he was dead. But Paul went down, and embracing the young man, restored him alive to his friends. Then Paul went up again, and continued preaching until daybreak, when he departed on his journey. Paul { Acts
 now returned by sea to Jerusalem, { ^{xii.}
 and gave the other apostles and elders an

account of all that he had been doing while away from them ; but the unbelieving Jews, immediately they found that Paul had returned, seized him in the Temple, and beat him so severely, that they nearly killed him ; and they would have killed him, if they had not been stopped by the captain of the Roman soldiers, who took Paul out of their hands, and secured him, and then wanted to find out what the Jews were beating him for. But so many cried out at once, that the captain could understand nothing ; so he commanded that he should be taken into the castle. And while on his way, Paul asked for permission to speak to the people ; and the captain having

Acts } granted it to him, he spake a long
xxii. } time to them, giving them a history of his own conversion. But when he had spoken to the people for some time, they interrupted him, and said, “ Away with him ! ” And some of the Jews, to the number of forty, joined together, and deter-



PAUL BEFORE FELIX.

mined to kill Paul before they either ate
 or drank again. Now it so happened that
 this wicked determination was found out
 by a nephew of Paul's, and he made
 it known to the captain, who ac- { Acts
 cordingly, to save Paul's life, sent him xxiii.
 away by night under a guard of soldiers to
 Cæsarea, to the Governor, whose name was
 Felix; and Paul was kept in the king's judg-
 ment-hall until his accusers had been sent for
 from Jerusalem, when he was brought to
 trial. And though Felix could not find
 any reason for condemning him, he kept the
 apostle a prisoner for two years, but gave
 him liberty to see his friends. At
 the end of two years a different { Acts
 governor was appointed, whose name was xxiv.
 Festus. By him Paul was again taken to
 be tried before King Agrippa, who, when
 he heard Paul speak about Jesus
 Christ, was almost persuaded by { Acts
 him to be a Christian. And he desired to xxvi.
 set Paul at liberty, but according to the

Roman law he could not do so; so Paul was sent with other prisoners to Rome.

QUESTIONS.

Charles. Where is Salamis?

Mamma. Get the maps, my love, for there have been many places mentioned in this last story, and I should like to point them out to you, and then you will see how St. Paul journeyed from one place to another, and back again to some many times. It is thought by some that Christianity was preached to the ancient Britons long before Augustine was sent over from Rome. Now, Charles, here is the right map; see if you can find Salamis.

Charles. Here it is, mamma, in the Island of Cyprus, in the Mediterranean Sea.

George. What is meant by a sorcerer?

Mamma. One who pretends to have the power of doing very extraordinary things, such as bringing up the spirits of

dead people, and causing evil to befall whoever they wish. A woman who pretends to this kind of knowledge is called a witch.

Henry. What country was Agrippa king of?

Mamma. Agrippa was the son of the Herod Agrippa who killed the Apostle James, and took Peter prisoner. He had a certain part of the country of Judea given him to rule over, with the title of king.

STORY V.

PAUL'S SHIPWRECK.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."—PSALM xxxiv. 19.

PAUL was delivered into the hands of a
Acts
xxvii. } soldier named Julius, who behaved
very kindly to him, and allowed
him to go on shore when, during the
voyage to Rome, the ship touched at any
place where the apostle had friends. The
ship went on her way for some time in
safety, but at length the sea became rough
and dangerous, and Paul perceived that
harm was very likely to befall them, and
he told his fears to the captain of the ship,
and the soldiers who guarded him. But
the captain paid no heed to the apostle's
warnings, and the soldiers believed the

captain, and not Paul. So they continued on their way, until they were so tossed about with wind and tempest, that they could not manage the ship; they were obliged to throw almost all the cargo into the sea to lighten the vessel, and prevent her from sinking. In this fearful state they remained for many days, with no sun to cheer them by day, and no stars to guide them by night; nothing around them but a howling tempest and a raging sea. And *then* they believed that they should be lost. Paul then stood up in the midst of them, and told them they should have listened to him, and not have continued the voyage; but that they might even now be of good cheer, for though the ship would be lost, not one on board her should perish. This he knew, for the God whom he served had told him so during the night.

Then Paul made them all take food, which they had not done for some time—

not for fourteen days. Paul also told them that they would be shipwrecked on an island, which very soon came to pass. Some of the sailors were going immediately to leave the ship by the boat, but Paul said to the soldiers, except all abide in the ship you will not be saved ; so then the soldiers cut the ropes which fastened the boat to the ship, and let it go. When the day dawned, and they could see the land, it was strange to them ; but the captain found a creek, or very small harbour, and into this he wished to guide the ship, but instead of doing so, he ran aground, and part of the vessel was broken by the waves. Now the soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners, lest they should escape, but the centurion, or captain of the band, wishing to save Paul's life, would not allow any of the prisoners to be put to death, but desired them all to get to the shore in the best way they could. So some swam, and others got hold of boards and different

parts of the broken ship, and all arrived safe on the land, in number two hundred and seventy-six.

They found that the island was called Melita, supposed to be what is now Malta, in the Mediterranean Sea, { Acts
xxviii. and not so very far from England. The inhabitants were very kind to these poor shipwrecked strangers, and lighted a fire to warm them and dry them. As Paul was throwing a bundle of sticks on the fire, a viper which had been hidden among them fastened on his hand. The inhabitants knowing it to be a reptile whose bite was dangerous, expected to see Paul's hand swell, or even to see him fall dead, but he shook the creature off into the fire, and felt no harm; and then they thought he must be one of the gods. The chief man, or Governor of the island, whose name was Publius, took Paul and his companions into his own house for three days, and was very kind to them; and he had his

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reward, for his father was in the house dangerously ill, and Paul laid his hands upon the sick man, with prayer, and healed him. When the people of the island heard of the miraculous cure of the sick man, all those who were ill came to Paul to be cured, and they were so grateful to the Apostle, that when the time came for them all to leave the island, the inhabitants loaded them with presents. This was at the end of three months, when they again went on their voyage, and this time they arrived safe at Rome. Paul was not put with the other prisoners, but was allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard him. He lived in the house for two years, and taught the people and preached to them without being hindered.

QUESTIONS.

George. What do you mean by the cargo of the ship?

Mamma. The cargo of a ship is what,

ever she is laden with, and may be timber, or cotton, or horses, or even men and women.

Charles. I remember you said a centurion was the captain of a hundred men; was it the centurion who had charge of Paul?

Mamma. Yes, my love. And now we have finished our Stories from the New Testament, and I hope you have learnt a little Bible history from them, and have found them interesting, and then I shall be well repaid for any little trouble I may have taken.

THE END.



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